Let it rain

Non-marketing staff can play a key role in securing business-development opportunities outside of targeted marketing campaigns. STACY WEST CLARK details some popular – and effective – approaches to rainmaking for lawyers.

Visit your clients at their offices
Plan a visit to tour your client's offices. Take them to lunch and/or provide an on-site briefing on a new legal development for their key managers. Ask to be introduced to their senior-management team. Expressly tell the client that the visit is free-of-charge and is being done to help you become more familiar with their people and business, so that you can better serve them.

Try something new
Be enthusiastically involved in activities outside of working hours. For example, politics, community service, a charity or trade organisation. It is highly important for you to put yourself in a position where you will rub elbows with potential clients and referral sources, who will see you in professional action. Merely joining a group does not count. You have to be an active member. Lead a committee of a trade association, a bar group, or a charity. Attend their events. Network and develop relationships.

Ask for feedback from clients
At the conclusion of every matter, take your clients out (tell them the time is on you) for the purpose of gaining feedback on your work and how the client thinks the relationship can be improved. Then, ensure you act on their comments.

Get your elevator speech ready
Be able to describe what you do in 15 seconds (or the time it takes you to reach your floor in an elevator, hence the name). You need to be able to introduce yourself and describe what you do in a way that is memorable, informative and which sells your services. Establish whether it is better to say 'I am a corporate lawyer' or 'I represent entertainers in their contract negotiations with major studios', for example.

Learn the client's business and industry
Go on Google, Westlaw or Lexis and research your client's business, key personnel, mentions in the news, current and past litigation and M&A activity – as much information as you can find. Try to identify areas where they may need assistance.

Treat referral sources like judges and clients
Cultivate them, send them work when appropriate and let them know the kind of work you are interested in. Keep track of the work each referral source sends to you. Discuss ways you can work together to grow both of your businesses.

Tell clients you want more work from them
It may sound obvious, but many firms do not. Clients do not mind-read, nor do they assume these things. So, ask if they require any more services. You will often be rewarded.

Make business cards multi-functional
When you meet someone at a party, bar event or trade show and they give you their business card, make a note on the back of it about your conversation with them. Write down information about the individual or their business and how you might follow up with them as soon as you meet them.

Be a client for a day
Sit in the chair the client sits in when they meet with you and evaluate what they see. Is it scuffed walls and strewn-around client files? What else? Call your phone number. How does your voicemail message sound and does it give out key information about you and your secretary so messages can reach you quickly. Is the message current? One hint is never to use the speaker phone to record your voicemail message.

Return to law school
If you have no clients, set up lunches with your law-school classmates, even if you did not know them when you were there. First, get a copy of your class's alumni directory (most institutions have a directory available in hard copy or electronic format). Then, identify who is in your area and works in a non-competing firm. Set up a meeting with them and discuss opportunities to send each other referrals. ■

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