Don't Have Time to Do Business Development? 15 Things You Can Do in 20 Minutes or Less

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By Stacy West Clark | January 18, 2024 at 09:11 AM

No matter what law firm I am working with, I always encounter lawyers who say: "I would love to focus on growing my practice, but I do not have any more time in the day and I am just trying to keep my head above water with client demands."

My response is always: Totally. Doing the work well is paramount.

But, I think you can do both—work hard and market successfully just by investing a few minutes each day.

So here are 15 things you can do in less than 20 minutes that can really pay off for you:

- Make a list on your phone or an index card, a Post-It or something you can put on your computer monitor, of three clients, three referral sources and one potential target you want work from in the next six months. They will be your focus for attention for the next three or six months—you choose. (To be known as "the list.")
- Call one client and schedule a meeting, off-the-clock, to discuss their views on how things are going and their satisfaction with your/team's services. This is called a client interview.
- Ask your assistant to prepare a file of current research and available news on the client for you including: press releases on their website, news that appears on a Google search, Google alerts on their name and more, so you are prepared. Now go do the meeting (email me if you want my step-by step prep sheet.)
- Get back from the client interview and memorialize what the client said and steps you will take to remedy anything. Share it with your team. Solicit feedback.
- Peruse headlines in the Wall Street Journal, the Philadelphia Business Journal, The Philadelphia Inquirer, the local community paper and one of your client's trade industry papers and send helpful articles to anyone on your list with a personal note. Describe in a sentence why you thought of them with this news story.
- Introduce one of the referral sources on your list to someone they want to meet for their business. Make a call or send an email to set it up.
- Come up with an idea for an on-site program that you can do for the clients listed in No. 1 above. Call the client and assess their interest on it or other topics they would welcome a free talk on for their key people.
- Calendar marketing as you would a court appearance. Set up a breakfast, or lunch date once a week (or twice!)—to meet with a client or referral source for the next three months. Break bread with someone who

already gives you business, or might, and really listen to what they need, are challenged by,
and more. After the meeting, come back and share what you learned with your team and decide on next steps. Act. Try to set up these “listening/check-in meetings” for the next three months.

- Make your assistant a vital part of your marketing! Start the week with a 20-minute chat on who you are meeting with or what you are working on, what follow-up with a contact you need to do and solicit his or her ideas on help—especially for improving the delivery of outstanding service provided to your clients.
- See if any client alerts or vital content were issued by your firm in the last few weeks and send it to those in No. 1 (and to your mailing list), with a personal note. Your assistant can set this up so you can send out two personal notes a day in 10 minutes.
- Ask a key client what professional/educational association meetings she goes to and find an upcoming meeting and go. By asking you are not assuming or guessing where your clients are hanging out—or where more clients could be. Ask. Fish where the fish are with an intent of joining, attending, speaking, writing and, eventually leading, some part of the organization in the next three years.
- Spend 15 minutes and create a “responsiveness plan” with your assistant. Review how you both can be faster and more responsive to emails, voicemails, inquiries, texts, LinkedIn postings by client or referral sources and more. The more responsive you are, the more you will be viewed as an effective partner. Your client will be happy and you will get more work.
- Check the home page of your LinkedIn newsfeed for a fast 10 minutes every few days. Importantly, act on what you see. These are people you know so “like” or positively comment on their post, and then consider an offline communication. Your connection is posting for a reason so show them that you saw what was on their mind and liked it.
- Set up at least one marketing activity a month that centers on something you really like to do so it is a pleasurable event for you. Do you like to go to sporting or music events, ice shows or museums, eat great food, escape the room, play golf? Well, pick one of your/your clients’ (and referral sources’) favorites and set up it up. Business development can really be fun.
- If you only have 10 minutes free—say you are waiting for a plane, or in a doctor’s waiting room—call a client, or referral source and follow up on your last conversation/assignment with them. Check in on how a matter that is important to them professionally or personally is fairing and offer help. Even gratis help. Give someone that is important to you your personal attention—yes for free.

Now I know you are very short on time, so stop reading this article and get up, get started, get going!

Stacy West Clark *has been helping Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware and New Jersey lawyers and law firms succeed in growing their practices for more than 25 years. She is a former attorney with Morgan, Lewis & Bockius and was the firm’s first director of client relations. For free articles on numerous business development and marketing topics, as well as more information about Clark and her work, go to www.stacyclarkmarketing.com.*