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How To Efficiently Deploy Your Professional Growth Strategy

By **Lana Manganiello** (May 10, 2022, 4:41 PM EDT)

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Thinking about business development is essential. In part one of this two-part article, I discussed how to create an effective marketing strategy. In part two, I will discuss ways to implement your strategy, even when you have limited time.

Now that many attorneys are busier than ever, they have the unique opportunity to be especially choosy and thoughtful about the type of work they would like to bring in.

There are a thousand ways to market, but with limited or no time to devote to business development it is imperative that you incorporate only the most effective actions that are going to build the reputation and relationships key to your ideal practice.

I discuss a few actionable ideas below that don't require a lot of time to implement and can have substantial impact. Incorporating one or two of these suggestions every month will help you continue to steer your career in the direction of your choosing.

Review your website biography.

Make sure your firm bio clearly highlights the professional focus you are striving for.

Include information about your breadth of experience only as it relates to the ideal work you want to be doing moving forward. Include representative matters that would be relevant to your target client and contacts, along with any additional information about yourself that is relevant or adds to your credibility — like charitable work, involvement in the profession, awards and recognitions, and articles and presentations.

Update your online profiles.

Ensure that your internet presence is telling the same story you are.

You can use your updated firm profile, written in the first person, on your LinkedIn page. Choose a headline — the description under your name — that clearly articulates what you do and for whom.

Make sure you are connected with all your professional contacts on LinkedIn. If you have an existing contact list you can upload it to LinkedIn and send a mass connection request. Google yourself and look for any third-party lawyer review sites you have been added to and update your information on all of them.

Network internally.

If you work at a law firm, take full advantage of being there.

If you approach your colleagues with genuine interest in better understanding them and their work, and a sincere desire to be of service, chances are high that it will be well received. People are more likely to be able to help you if you are very clear with them on exactly what it is you want. Let your colleague know what you are working toward and what steps you are taking to get there.

If you tell someone that you are focusing your practice on probate litigation and are building relationships with estate planning attorneys, you are more likely to get a referral or introduction than if you vaguely let them know you are growing your litigation practice and would appreciate them keeping you in mind.

Consider cross-selling opportunities.

If your firm recognizes origination credit, it is wise to consider an approach to leveraging your existing relationships to bring in matters and clients that you won't be handling yourself. There are many reasons to cross-sell: You get paid, you get credit at the firm, and, if you are expanding work from one of your current clients, it is more likely they will be better served, and less likely they will replace you.

In my client development coaching and training practice, I work with attorneys that earn a majority of their compensation from work they don't personally handle, and their firms and clients are very happy. Even if you are more interested in doing actual legal work than you are in teeing up work for a colleague, being mindful of cross-selling opportunities is a good idea.

Below are some ways to develop opportunities for colleagues.

Collaborate.

Partner with colleagues in complimentary practice areas to come up with ways to collaborate on thought leadership. Consider working on an article, white paper, panel, presentation or webinar together, focused on a topic of interest to your clients and contacts.

Make introductions.

Think about possible connections you can make between your contacts and colleagues. Set up introductory lunches or Zoom calls. Invite contacts to webinars or presentations your colleagues are putting on that would be of interest. Put together a social event and invite contacts that would benefit in meeting one another and specific colleagues.

Create a short list of your top contacts.

Go through your existing contacts and find the people you feel are most likely to lead to opportunities you have identified as ideal from the "ascertain" step in the ADAPTS framework I introduced in yesterday's article.

Make a short list of less than 20 of your connections that fit into the categories you have identified as targets, and people you want to bolster your relationship with and stay in front of.

You want to make sure your business development efforts are focused on this list. Think of all the ways you might be of service to these people, what information can you provide, introductions you can make, invitations you can extend, etc. Ideally, you will facilitate six to 10 "touches" a year with this list.

I like to keep a spreadsheet with my top 15 contacts and track when I last reached out, and when I plan to reach out next.

Expand your network.

If you're working to elevate your practice to the next level, it is likely you need to add connections in your target contact categories. Consider joining organizations. Being a member of some associations and professional organizations can instantly boost your credibility.

Consider the reputation of the organization, whether you want to get to know the people in leadership, if they have events and publications you might want to participate in or contribute to, and if the annual dues are in your budget. Once you sign up, make sure you update your bio and LinkedIn profile by listing your membership.

Have conversations.

Marketing can help position you for successful conversations with the right people, but business development doesn't happen without meaningful dialogue with people.

Reach out to the people you have identified as key contacts and schedule time to connect. If it is feasible to meet in person, think about what will make the meeting as valuable and special as possible for the contact.

Would the person be more interested in a fine dining experience or a sunset walk and talk? Is there another person you can invite that your key contact would want to meet? If meeting in person is not an option, a video call is almost always better than a phone call when you are trying to further a relationship.

Prepare before the meeting. What questions will you ask? What do you want to share about yourself? Consider bringing a small thoughtful gift — or sending something if you won't be meeting in person — that shows the person you value them.

Outline a topic for your thought leadership.

Decide on a niche topic that is interesting to you, relevant to your target client, and demonstrative of your high level of expertise in your practice area. Pick something that you want to be known for and something that you can focus your marketing messaging around for 12 months.

Start with an overall description of the topic and flesh out an outline. If you are not interested in writing or don't want to spend time writing, consider hiring a ghostwriter to help you write the article. Once you have an article, reach out to the organizations and publications you have identified as highly regarded — the "position" stage in the ADAPTS framework in the previous article — to see if they are interested in publishing it.

To maximize the time and energy you put into your thought leadership piece, consider all the ways you can repurpose the information, including turning it into a presentation, webinar or video series.

Come up with an activity goal.

Decide on consistent business development activity goals to strive for. Maybe one outreach a week to set up a meeting. If you have very limited time, only reach out to people who are so valuable to your future practice and work life that you would not think twice about putting a pin in your current work for an hour or two so you can connect with them.

Perhaps you pitch to speak at a conference once a quarter, again only selecting opportunities that are key to your future success and topics that are specific to your ideal work and clients. Work on a thought leadership idea and give yourself a deadline. Write down your activity goals and schedule a regular time to review them, like every Friday morning from 8 to 8:30 a.m.

It is also a wise practice to track your activity, write down exactly what it is you are doing for marketing, business or client development on a weekly or monthly basis.

With this information, you can evaluate what is working for you and what isn't and assess where you might want to double down or ease up.

Create some accountability around your activity goals.

If you tell someone that you are going to do something, the likelihood of you getting it done goes way up.

Whether it is a growth-minded colleague, an internal marketing professional or an external coach, checking in regularly with someone is a great way to keep you on course.

Have fun.

Organizational psychologist Adam Grant said, "Being a workaholic isn't the key to productivity. It's a recipe for languishing. Having fun isn't an enemy of efficiency. It's fuel for finding flow."

Your business development activities should be enjoyable. If you are in the advantageous position of not needing to bring in business to stay busy, you can be focused on developing relationships with people you truly enjoy and respect, and building your reputation and expertise around issues that are interesting and exciting to you.

You are in control of your career, so taking the time to figure out what you want and being very intentional about making it happen is the best path to an engaging and fulfilling career.

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