

## Work InBalance

By Deborah  
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### Business Development in a 24/7 World

*This column is the third of six articles that will be written this year about the balancing and juggling act that we all experience as busy lawyers trying to keep our work and personal lives in order and balance. It is our hope that this series of articles will spark a meaningful dialogue and assist our readers with managing their busy lives.*



Deborah Epstein Henry

**A**ttorneys in law firms are increasingly expected to develop business early in their careers, but most feel they do not have the time. Yet business development is a matter of networking—building relationships and connections. This is something you do naturally in almost every facet of your daily life, whether you are pressed for time or not. This article will explore ways in which you can recognize marketing opportunities in activities in which you are already engaged and relationships you already have, and how you can build networking into your already busy lives.

Why do lawyers feel they do not have time to develop their business?

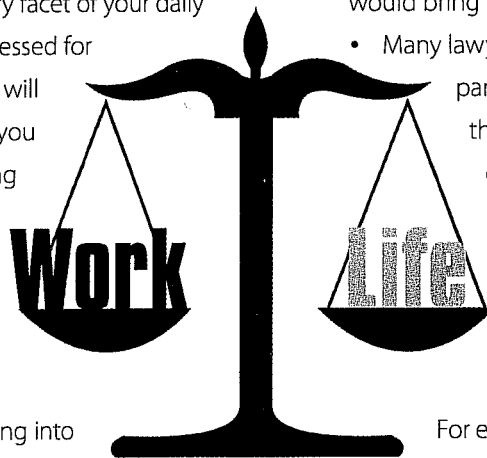
- The traditional framework for developing business is not one in which many lawyers feel comfortable; therefore, they consider their efforts to be a “waste of time.”
- Lawyers with children often feel the most time-pressed, and marketing is likely to be the first thing they drop once children come along.

- Although many lawyers have successful personal relationships, they may feel uncomfortable translating personal relationships into professional dealings.
- Many junior lawyers feel they do not yet have access to the powerbrokers that would bring in the right type of business.
- Many lawyers lose opportunities to expand existing business because they fail to take credit where credit is due. As a result, their colleagues and clients do not appreciate their contributions.

These issues are even more acute for women.

For example, golf courses and spectator-sporting events have

been traditionally male venues for business development. Women may feel shut out of access to an “old boy’s network.” In addition, women typically shoulder more responsibility for childcare than men do, and, therefore, home time encroaches on their evening marketing opportunities. Women also tend to have more difficulty translating personal relationships into professional dealings, and have a harder time with self promotion or simply taking credit.



Before you address these challenges, you need to have a plan. Identify the prospective clients and networks you want to target. Brainstorm about the types of meetings, conferences, organizations, events, and venues where you should be able to meet the people you need to know. Determine the background information you will need to succeed in your pitch, and the writing and speaking you will need to do to get your message across and get the exposure you need. You also should have a strategy for following up on leads, as well as a schedule to revise your plan on an annual basis.

### **Change the Networking Venue to One Where You Naturally Thrive**

There is no single magical venue where client relationships can be developed. But you are likely to succeed in building relationships in a place where you feel comfortable. Participate in activities, events, or organizations that you really enjoy. Through authentic participation, you are much more likely to meet others to whom you can actually relate. And be selective; rather than joining everything that even remotely interests you, engage in a few activities in which you play a leadership or integral role.

If your firm provides you with a networking budget, consider going beyond the traditional venues. Go to an art opening, theater premiere, auction, cooking class, golf clinic,

self-defense workshop, antiquing excursion, spa outing, reading, or wine tasting. When choosing an unconventional networking outing, make sure that the environment lends itself to relationship-building and conversation. While it is important to find networking venues where you will thrive, do not exclude yourself from the more typical business development opportunities that surround you. If you are at ease in these venues, you will be broadening your opportunities by participating in them too.

### **Translate Personal Relationships into Professional Dealings**

Make a list of every nonprofessional activity in which you already participate. Think of all of the networking opportunities at your children's schools, your civic association, religious organization, charity, book club, sports team, or gym. You are likely already well-known there; it is a natural next step to project yourself as a valuable contributor who also happens to be an intelligent lawyer.

Keep in mind that you have an opportunity to start a business relationship every time you introduce yourself to someone you do not know. Remember to use your last name when you introduce yourself to people socially, so people will be able to identify you later. And make sure your new acquaintances know what you do; to this end, you should

be able to describe your specialty in a sentence or two in layperson's terms.

After talking with or meeting someone, follow-up and repetition are critical. If you have discussed a legal issue with a friend or prospective client, follow up with an email, with your signature line, addressing the topic you discussed. This enables people with whom you have social relationships to gradually expand their vision of you into a professional context. Handwritten notes are a nice personal touch and a great way to follow up after making contact with someone. If your firm gives you a marketing budget and you can envision a friend (or a friend's spouse) becoming a prospective client, offer to take them out at the firm's expense and have them get to know you and your work better. If you and the prospective client find you know people in common, elaborate on this, because it builds credibility and broadens the context in which they know you. Offer to visit prospective clients at their site to demonstrate your interest and gain better knowledge of their business. Be sure to send your firm's holiday cards to potential clients to remind them of your professional affiliation.

If you are uncomfortable selling yourself to friends for fear of bragging or jeopardizing your friendship, you need to remind yourself that networking is a gradual process of mutual benefit. When it works, it is about giving and listening and being generous with your time. You also have the

*continued on page 18*

## Work InBalance

*continued from page 17*

option to refer business to colleagues, originating the business while distancing yourself from the actual work and the potential awkwardness or tension that may result. Ultimately, however, you need to learn how to transition personal relationships into professional ones to benefit both your friends and yourself.

### **Maximize Marketing in the Activities in Which You Are Already Engaged**

If you belong to bar associations, trade associations, and/or other professional organizations, use these opportunities to make connections with others who may refer business to you. If these associations hold regular events with introductions or they circulate member directories, the relationships are often more fruitful because they are based on a shared interest and repeated contact, building familiarity and opportunities for follow-up.

Maximize your visibility through the non-billable work you already perform. In your required non-billable time, choose visible work you enjoy, such as recruiting, and make an effort to attend departmental meetings, firm retreats, and other firm events that command a large audience. Be deliberate and plan ahead to schedule

periodic longer lunches with prospective clients and colleagues.

Recycle your work product. If you are asked to give an internal presentation or write a memo for your department, you can convert it into a client alert or article and use it to solicit speaking engagements. Once the initial non-billable assignment is completed, the conversion process is easy and does not take significantly more work or time. Use the resources available to you through your assistant and the firm's library and marketing department to help with the work. The library can research the best publications; the marketing department can develop a list of contacts for you and help get the article published. Once your article is written or you give your talk, your marketing department can publicize it both internally and externally to maximize the visibility of your work.

### **Gain Access to Decision-Makers and Become the Point Person**

You may not have access to decision makers of today; nevertheless, if you nurture the law school, personal, and professional relationships you have now, these individuals will one day be the powerbrokers. In the meantime, you have the opportunity to develop your name and reputation through doing excellent work, giving speeches, writing articles, and establishing relationships with more-junior lawyers who will rise up through the ranks.

If a company frequently uses a certain firm for its work, develop a relationship with it to pursue the conflict work. Invite prospective clients to any talks you plan to give, so they can observe you professionally and begin to see you in a position of authority. If you are too junior to be giving the talk, become the chair or co-chair of a conference and get to know the influential speakers through the planning and event itself. Attend conferences where senior lawyers speak, and follow up with a helpful article or client alert.

If you are not ready to bring in business based on your own skills, then an interim step is to become a resource or "go-to" person so that you can direct business to your colleagues. If you refer a case to a colleague or another lawyer, that person likely will think of you when a later opportunity arises to return the favor.

### **Do Excellent Work, Take Credit, and Network Internally**

If you cannot envision ever bringing in the types of clients your firm services, then focus on developing a stellar reputation, expanding the firm's existing business, and marketing yourself internally to colleagues.

Internal relationship-building is a critical component to success. Initiate mentoring relationships with colleagues with whom you work, would like to work, or otherwise admire. Develop a relationship with the assigning partner or administrator

*continued on page 20*

## Work InBalance

*continued from page 18*

who determines the type of work you do and the colleagues with whom you work. Also develop a relationship with the marketing person who should be instrumental in promoting you internally and externally.

Work with as many colleagues as possible to gain broad support and to benefit directly from varied work styles. Build strong relationships with senior colleagues, and do terrific work for them so that when it is time for retirement, they will want you to inherit their clients to continue the excellent job servicing them. You also need to become indispensable to the existing clients of the firm, so that they remain clients and, in turn, insist on working with you. If possible, expand the breadth of clients for whom you work as well. Be "present" even if you are not in the office every day by sending emails and personal notes, and by circulating relevant articles.

Make sure your colleagues are aware of your contributions, and take credit for your successes. Review time is an excellent opportunity to summarize the past year by submitting a punch list of your contributions and successes to be discussed at your review, and this list of accomplishments then should be added to your file.

### **Attend the Traditional Networking Cocktail Party**

When you attend a conventional networking event, such as a cocktail party, stage the event in your mind. Take into consideration how long you will be there, and decide how many people you would like to meet, what types of people you would like to meet, and who in particular you would like to meet. Prepare a concise description—in layperson's terms—of your professional affiliation and what you do. Practice initiating and wrapping up brief conversations and exchanging business cards. It may be helpful to attend networking events with friends from non-competitive areas with the goal of catching up with those contacts and benefiting from each other's networks, without limiting your evening's socializing to your friends.

Follow-up after networking events is critical. Write notes to yourself on the business cards you collect so that you remember who you met, what you discussed, and what, if anything, you promised to do afterwards. Ideally, follow up with each new contact within a few days of the event, and do what you said you would do. If no promises were made, simply say you enjoyed meeting the

person and you hope to cross paths again soon. Then remember to keep in touch.

Networking activities develop business. But you need to be creative in engaging in networking opportunities that fit your personality and that of the clients you hope to attract. Identifying your strengths and interests, establishing rapport with people who share those interests, and making sure your contacts, colleagues, and community view you as both a trustworthy person and a great lawyer will lay the foundations for a strong and productive network. **DB**

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*Deborah Epstein Henry, Esq. is founder and president of Flex-Time Lawyers LLC, which advises lawyers and legal employers about work/life balance and the retention and promotion of women. Please visit [www.flextimelawyers.com](http://www.flextimelawyers.com). To suggest future column topics, please email [dehenry@flextimelawyers.com](mailto:dehenry@flextimelawyers.com) and include Work InBalance in the subject line.*