

RAINMAKERS DON'T MAKE RAIN. THEY JUST KNOW WHEN TO CARRY AN UMBRELLA

Most law firms, regardless of size, generally depend on a few rainmakers to generate new business. What many lawyers fail to realize, however, is that the ability to develop new business isn't a natural talent that is bestowed at birth. Most rainmakers are made, not born. In other words, lawyers who learn the basic techniques – and apply them – can generate more new business than they ever thought possible. And in today's legal market, every firm needs every lawyer, not just the rainmakers, developing new business. Here are some of the basic techniques.

- **Be the best lawyer you can be.** Most rainmakers do excellent work.
- **Most new business comes as the result of relationships, referrals or reputation.**
- **Develop and maintain relationships with the following:**
 - Current clients
 - Prospective clients
 - Referral sources
 - Other attorneys in your firm
 - Your own personal contacts – friends, neighbors, relatives.
- **If you refer to another lawyer, remember one lawyer's definition of a good referral:**
“Can do the work. Won't steal the client. Will refer back.”
- **Whenever possible, refer to attorneys in your firm.** And educate them so they can refer work to you.
- **Call each person you refer someone to** so they know you made a referral to them and are also ready when you party contacts them.
- **Don't try to be a salesperson.** It turns most people off. **Be a problem solver.**
- **Be a good listener.** Hear what is said – and what is meant.
- **Understand the Principle of Transfer.** Non-lawyers are strange people. If they know you are a lawyer, and if they are impressed with you and the way you handle yourself in a non-legal situation, they will transfer this impression and assume you are also a good lawyer. This really means you may be developing business even when you're not developing business.
- **Be alert.** Many rainmaking opportunities are unplanned and unexpected. The person on the opposite side of your current case or transaction may call you to handle a matter for them tomorrow.
- **Develop marketing habits.** No matter how busy you are, call a prospective client or referral source or follow up on a lead every day.
- **Don't complain about being too busy or over-worked.** That can turn away prospective clients and referral sources. When asked how business is, say “Business is great – but we always have room for good new clients.”

- **Be active outside the firm.** But select only organizations or activities that you believe in and enjoy. Then be a participant, not just a joiner. Develop a reputation as a source of good ideas and a problem-solver. The Principle of Transfer will take over from there.
- **Never say “no” when a good client, prospect or referral source asks you to participate in a civic or charitable activity.**
- **Get comfortable with social media.**
- **Write for publication** (if you have writing ability). This doesn’t have to be for bar journals. There are over 90,000 general, business and trade publications in the United States alone that are constantly looking for material.
- **Speak** (if you have speaking ability). Organizations from the local garden club to the local bar association or the Business Roundtable are always looking for speakers.
- **When meeting with prospective clients:**
 - Interview them first. Get them to discuss their wants, needs and problems.
 - Ask about other issues they may not have thought of.
 - Ask what their budget is or what they expect the legal fees will be.
 - Respond to what they need or want – unless there is an ethical or legal problem. You can’t “sell” a prospect what they don’t need want.
 - If they are also interviewing other firms or lawyers, ask what their timetable is.
 - If you are making a presentation in response to an RFP, conclude with a statement like: “We would like to represent you and hope you will select us.” You may think that’s obvious but to the prospect it may not be unless you say it. Sometimes that’s the only difference between you and another lawyer who didn’t ask for the business.

Use as many of these techniques as you can - and keep your umbrella handy!

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My Associates and I provide management, marketing and strategic planning guidance to law firms and businesses throughout the United States and parts of Canada. Reports and discussions of timely issues, as well as recent Legal and Corporate Communiques, are posted on our web site, www.robertdenney.com.

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