

Must-do Tips No 72 - Business Developers: Where Is The Future?

According to a recent survey¹, business development skills are widely acknowledged as the second most important attribute for upcoming professionals to have - now **and** in five years' time; easily outranking both specialist knowledge and technical ability. So what are we doing to ensure that this happens?

Without doubt, there are gaps between such aspiration and the reality. How many partners or other senior professionals really devote significant time and effort to overseeing and guiding the honing of staff client development skills? How much **real** recognition is given to business development when compared with the traditional bastion of chargeable hours? This month we offer three ideas that can help build the Business Developers of your future.

Tip 1 – give them a relationship role

Many associates or managers don't get the chance to learn about BD because they are never given any responsibility for it (also reinforcing negative perceptions that they are nothing but "slaves to the chargeable hour"). Yet they can perform a very useful role by being allocated responsibility for specific relationships with client individuals **at their level**: individuals that are usually not covered by their seniors, and who may well grow into key contacts of the future for the firm....if they are developed early on. This is the 'horses for courses' approach in action.

Tip 2 - tender is (the order of) the day

In our opinion, the regular and meaningful involvement in tenders and new business pitches for team members should be an unwritten rule for all partners and other senior professionals in any firm. Unfortunately, for some firms or departments/practice areas, this can rarely or ever happen.

Not only do fee earners provide much needed help to get the job done - pitches are often time-critical events - they can also provide a refreshingly different and creative 'Generation Y' perspective on the issues that may be important to success. Fully involved up to and including the client presentation stage, they have also proven to be a crucial element from the potential client's viewpoint. Because most clients want to see ALL of what they will get.

¹ 'Future Lawyers' by Legal Week in association with Badenoch & Clark, April 2010



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Tip 3 - secondees out!... and well prepared

Those firms that provide secondments to clients often do not make the most of the opportunities presented - in client care, BD, and personal development through invaluable 'face time' with client contacts. So associates or managers are just served up to clients as 'arms and legs' with no preparation, context or consequence for what they are doing. Whatever they learn and however they develop is at best haphazard.

Secondees **must** be: thoroughly briefed on what the firm expects of them (which includes being alive to BD opportunities!); provided with training if they need it; contacted regularly while on secondment - including meetings to allow them to download in real time what they are learning, be coached, and if necessary re-focused or targeted for what the firm needs; and finally, debriefed fully once they have completed the assignment. As we said at the beginning, each of these tips requires time commitment and management effort from partners and others - or the opportunities for firm and professional go begging.

To further inspire, we now have some 20 workshops available as off-the-shelf Master Classes: and as tailored Bespoke courses. These are in three main areas - **Business Development, Client Relationship Management and Leadership & Management** - and cover everything from the *Fundamentals of Practice Development, The Art of Cross Selling and Good Fee Negotiation* to *Professional Appraisals and Handling Difficult Situations & People*. A comprehensive, non-technical development resource. To find out more, just go to <http://www.peoplescope.com/training-programme.php>.

You can tap into help on how to survive the downturn via **Business Development in Recession**. This article series is available **free** to view and download at <http://www.peoplescope.com/articles.php>. Also to access for free, we have a wide selection of previous issues of Must-do Tips offering practical, real world advice: just go to <http://www.peoplescope.com/must-do-tips.php>.

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Best regards.

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