

Law Firm Business Development: Be Confident and ASK

By [Silvia L. Coulter](#) on October 20, 2016

Speaking with a client today, I was reminded of one of the most common mistakes lawyers make when it comes to business development. They forget to ask for the business. My client, a young partner with an outstanding book of business already, said "I could not believe I asked this contact of mine when we would have the opportunity to work on one of her cases and she replied by saying, 'you never asked!'" He was astonished and said, "she knows what I do, we are good friends too." True, but one still has to ask for the business and make it known you would like to do business with your contacts. Otherwise, they are happy to have lunch, play golf, see you at conferences, and continue their good relationship with you. One must ask for the business.

Here are some effective ways of doing this that may be useful to you as a lawyer or to you as someone who helps lawyers at your firm:

- What else should we be doing to have the opportunity to work with ABC Corp? (if a personal relationship, this distances you a bit by talking about how the firm and the business (versus you as individuals) may work together.
- What else should I be doing to have the opportunity to work with you and the company? (A bit more direct and like the above, demonstrates confidence).
- Who else do we/I need to meet so we have the opportunity to work together in the future? It's safe to assume others are involved in the decision-making process so ask up front about who else to meet.
- When will you be making the decision to hire someone for this deal/case/matter/mandate? We'd like to work with you and the company. What else do you need from us?
- We/I would like the opportunity to work with you. Please do think of us for your next opportunity.

There are many more ways to ask. In house counsel and other decision-makers will tell you to be direct, demonstrate confidence and ask for the business. Clients often tell us they begin to assess a lawyer's ability during the sales process: is s/he direct? Confident? A team player? Responsive? Keep that in mind and you'll raise your opportunities to close new business.