

Law Firm Business Development: Building Business by Removing Roadblocks

By [Silvia L. Coulter](#) on June 29, 2020

We have the opportunity to work with many great partners from many firms to help them with their relationship-building and sales pursuits. One thing has become crystal clear—no matter how skilled at rainmaking many are, from time to time they run into roadblocks. Our job as coaches is to help them steer around these roadblocks to new avenues of opportunity. The more sophisticated the partner is at selling, the more sophisticated the roadblock may be. Here are some tips for mist-makers and rainmakers (based on actual discussions we've had):

Roadblock #1: *I'd prefer to meet in person and do my best selling when I'm face to face with prospects and clients.*

Given the state of things as they stand now, it will be a while before I connect with a lot of my contacts. I'm busy and I don't often have time if someone wants to reach out to "catch up, I'm sure my contacts feel the same way."

Response: Clients and contacts expect to hear from you. In this environment with all its challenges, checking in is important, if for no other reason than to ask how they and their families and work teams are doing. It's that simple. It's also a good time to ask "How has Covid-19 changed the business strategy of your company?" It's a good way to engage your contacts and clients and to learn more about their issues, challenges, and business. That's what clients expect. Most clients deal with many outside firms so it's best to be the person to connect on a regular basis.

Roadblock #2: *The person I have the best relationship with at the company is not necessarily the right person to connect with for other work.*

Response: Connecting with contacts and asking an open-ended questions people have to answer (versus replying "yes" or "no" to) is the only route to take most of the time. Two good ways to leverage existing relationships: 1. "It's always great to connect with you, NAME. I'd welcome your advice—who else at ABC Corp. would be good for us/name of firm to meet?" One must ask for these introductions just like asking for the business, or it doesn't happen. 2. "It's always great to connect with you, NAME. I would welcome the opportunity for the next level down generation at ABC Corp. to meet with some of the next generation level down members of FIRMNAME. How do you suggest we make that happen?" OR "What are your recommendations for who on the ABC Corp. team should meet with our younger team?" Then set a date and make it happen.

Roadblock #3: *We receive all their work in this area.*

Response: It is unlikely that any one firm receives all the work from a client; it can happen but it is rare. And, there is always opportunity to insure that the client will stay with the firm for many years. See the response to Roadblock #2 above and try building relationships with the next generation from the client and firm side.

Roadblock #4: *I have my own contacts at ABC Corp., but partner X receives all the origination credit for this client. Why should I spend time trying to make this happen when I get no credit. This roadblock is common even with seasoned rainmakers.*

Response: Approach partner X and say, “I will be developing additional work from my contact at ABC Corp., I propose that we split origination 80 (you)/20 since this will be a new area for the firm and I’ve known her since we were at XXX firm/law school, etc.” Don’t let opportunities go by because of this roadblock. Be confident, ask for what is rightly your credit and build new business for you and the firm. Negotiate on your own behalf

Roadblock #5: I have no time.

Response: Everyone is super busy almost all the time. The more organized you are, the better. If you spend only 6 minutes a day on business development that adds up to a lot of time over a month. Try doing some outreach first thing in the morning before you turn to client or firm work. For tools to help keep you organized, email us at scoulter@lawvision.com and we’ll send you a Contact Activity Tracker to keep you focused. Organization and focused outreach will always be the keys to business development success.

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