

Law Firm Business Development: Make The Most Out Of Informal Interaction

By [LawVision](#) on July 3, 2015

Well, the warmth has finally arrived here in New England this 4th of July weekend. Seriously. The high temperature last Sunday in Boston was only 58 degrees! In any case, along with the warm weather, and summer more generally, comes increased outdoor social activity. Some of this social activity may even be with clients or prospective clients. Accordingly, there are plenty of informal opportunities for relationship development—which we all know is what business development really is—in non-business settings such as a cookout, a baseball game, soccer practice, etc. These activities are actually great opportunities for deepening existing business relationships and developing new ones.

If you're an in-house marketing/business development professional, strongly suggest to your lawyers that they approach each of these settings with some specific objective related to business development in mind. Try to steer them away from the notion that they are simply going to "catch up." The latter is a missed opportunity. There may be some discomfort at first by lawyers to have what might appear to be a "hidden agenda" (you lawyers know who you are!) going into these otherwise socially pleasant, airy, non-business events; an agenda that, on its face, may appear to be self-serving in nature. If so, the situation is being approached with the wrong objectives in mind. I'm not suggesting that you interrupt the flow of what would otherwise be a social occasion with a question or two about how your contact could give you more work. Rather, consider the objectives where the primary focus is on delivering benefit to your contact. These categories range from making introductions (professional or personal), to getting to know their organization better if the talk turns to business (what are their department goals, who do they report to, how are they measured, their definition of value, etc.?), to giving them a gift because of a recently celebrated anniversary, birthday, peer recognition, promotion, etc. The list of possible objectives are virtually endless and, as such, coming up with a meaningful (and painless) objective or two for every informal interaction should be relatively easy. Always start from the position of giving something and the discomfort will quickly vanish or may never even materialize in the first place. If you establish an objective for every business development setting, whether it's a formal pitch meeting or a casual beer around the beach campfire, you'll make the most out of these "sales conversations" and will deepen and broaden your most valuable relationships in the process.

Have a great 4th, everyone!