

Law Firm Business Development: Top Tips for Client Growth

By [Silvia L. Coulter](#) on June 28, 2021

Retaining and expanding existing clients must be, or remain, an essential strategic imperative for the survival of any firm today. Firms for years have talked about “cross-selling” yet it remains an elusive concept that escapes many firms. Here are some tips for retaining and growing existing clients and/or industry segments.

1. Go talk with the clients. An essential part of any client retention and growth plan is to make sure the responsible team at the firm knows a) the client’s strategic growth goals; b) key executives at the client organization (above and beyond perhaps, the individuals one already knows); and c) the competition and the type of work they receive. There is obviously more to know. These are the key areas about which the firm must have information. Go ask the clients. If there is hesitation to do so on the part of the partner(s) or the client, then that should signal a big concern.
2. Build relationships across peer groups. The long-term success of any firm/client relationship is dependent upon building new relationships. Clients enjoy introducing their team members to their outside providers’ team members. Trusting relationships take a long time to build. This strategic objective is not optional, it’s essential for the retention and growth of the clients.
3. Do not speculate. Acting on speculative perceptions about what the clients want or need or don’t want or don’t need is like walking on quicksand. It will quickly sink relationships. Ask and be clear so the facts and the opportunities present themselves. Then act based on reality and not speculation.
4. Facilitate conversations with one another at the firm. Expecting people to spend time during their day to think about how to introduce others to their clients is not a good way to build new opportunities. Schedule a call, meeting, or virtual meeting with a relationship partner and approach the conversation in the same fashion as with an outside referral source. Build a trusting relationship, have a next step, and discuss the best options for meeting with one or two clients to learn more about their work in an area where the competition seems to have a hold. Leave these internal referral source meetings with a next step to stay connected.
5. Create a sales forecast of potential opportunities based on conversations with clients. Keeping track of the opportunities is easy. Track on a scale of 1 to 5. 1s are opportunities; 2s reflect a conversation and next steps have been identified; 3s are 50-60% likelihood there’s an active pursuit – e.g., RFP response; meeting to present solutions; 4s are opportunities that just need a final confirmation to move forward and 5s are closed business/new engagements. Sales pipelines represent opportunity and can be energizing to keep the process moving forward.

Implementing these essential and often-talked about tips is a sure way to guarantee success with client retention and growth goals.