

Law Firm Business Development: Where to Invest Sales Coaching Dollars

By [Silvia L. Coulter](#) on October 5, 2020

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The best use of any sales coaching investment is with the individuals at the firm who are both interested in continuing to build their business development skills and who are already successful at business development. This includes rainmakers. In fact, rainmakers, with some framework and direction, may increase their book of business to even more significant levels.

This is not to say sales training, in general, is a waste—it certainly is beneficial at all levels since good selling skills include and focus on the client's business and legal needs. This focus always leads to improved client service.

As we know, all top athletes have coaches. To stay at the top of one's game means constantly tweaking what they already know and helping them to be even better, to reach out to new, sometimes uncharted territory, and to leverage their existing successes.

Before investing in rainmakers' and account managers' selling skills, consider this. A rainmaker is someone, by our definition, who has the skills to develop contacts into clients. An "account manager," as we call it, is someone who may have inherited a client or who works with existing clients and is very good at helping to expand those relationships. There is a difference. And a good coach will help both these successful individuals. A rainmaker will, more often than not, show a significant increase in the business they develop. Keep in mind, it all takes time, and results usually show between twelve and twenty-four months.

Investing in the lawyers who are most likely to produce fast and strong results requires a focus on these selection considerations:

- **Willingness to learn**—It may sound simple, but this is one of the key ingredients to coaching success—an individual's willingness to learn and try new things. Do they want to learn how to develop business for the long term?
- **Organization**—Whether it's our format and tools or their own, organized individuals will enjoy a greater return on their investment of business development time. They will need a list of clients (past and current—those they bill and those they have originated) along with a printout of all their contacts. The most successful rainmakers have a plan and stick to it.
- **Demonstrated Ability**—In some cases, an individual under consideration has already been successful at business development. Fine-tuning his/her focus can lead to even greater success.
- **Commitment**—At least two hours a month (often more) to focus on completing tasks they've identified that will help them move forward with the sales process; are they goal-oriented, and do they work to meet those goals?
- **Motivation/Desire**—If they have the will, there is a way to be successful, and anyone is able to succeed at business development—this needs to be something they want to do versus something being forced onto them. If so, they

will succeed.

- **Assertiveness**—If an individual (primarily junior, mid-level, and senior partners) spends more than 50% of their time billing to other lawyers' files, it's time to focus some of that time on building their own book of business to contribute to the firm and their overall success.
- **Team Player**—We will help them to sell internally to their colleagues at the firm and to important referral sources and contacts.
- **Enthusiasm/Drive**—He/she can see challenges as opportunities and strive to achieve success. Demonstrates the ability to understand it takes many at-bats to score home runs.
- **Leadership**—Is this an individual whom others tend to follow or admire? Does this individual take a position on issues and make it known? Is this individual willing to follow as well as lead? If so, this individual will be successful in the program.
- **A Good Investment**—He/she is seen as part of the future of the firm. The coaching candidates are people in whom the firm wishes to invest.

Focusing on selecting the right individuals for sales coaching will help ROI on the firm's investment and the lawyers to succeed. In turn, a revenue uptick is almost assured after a year or two implementing the refined skills.