

## Law Firm Marketing: Business Development is Relationship Development

By [LawVision](#) on January 30, 2014

Since business development is more of an art than a science, few rules exist that apply in all business development scenarios. Some rules that I offer my clients include:

1. There are definitive steps in the sales cycle and you must earn the right to advance to the next step.
2. Preparation is key, but there's no need to get paralyzed by it—don't let the need for exhaustive preparation get in the way of scheduling sales meetings.
3. Focus on "having a discussion," rather than "making a presentation."
4. People buy from who they like, so it's important to make a connection.
5. It is less important to know how to sell than to know why people are buying.
6. Finally, relationships trump everything.

So, if we agree that relationships trump everything, it is wise to use relationship development principles in our business development efforts. You likely (perhaps subconsciously) apply many of the following principles every day in your personal relationships with your significant other, your friends, your neighbors, etc. These principles include: caring deeply; asking thoughtful questions; listening intently to the answers; working from a position of collaboration when negotiating ("winning" isn't winning; win-win is winning); earning the right to move to the next level of the sales process by respecting the client's process for buying.

Referring back to the earlier point that "it's less important to know how to sell than it is to know why people are buying," it is critical to find out what is motivating the buyer. The fundamentals of relationship development apply here. Think about it. If you "care deeply," you're naturally going to be very curious about the other person (the buyer). If you're truly curious about the other person, then you will naturally ask great questions and listen intently to the answers. And so on. If you don't think you're very good at business development, re-frame your mindset. You are likely pretty good at relationship development, so focus on applying these skills to your business development efforts. If you do, you'll develop deep, long-term, mutually-beneficial relationships with your clients that will result in delivering maximum value to them and increased win rates for you. Give it a try.