

Law Firms' Use of Pitchbooks for Business Development

By [LawVision](#) on October 25, 2012

"To Present, or not to Present. That is the question..."

Pitchbooks have been an integral part of the business development effort at every law firm that I've had the pleasure of working with over the years. Pitchbooks are so similar from firm-to-firm, it's simply remarkable. It's particularly remarkable because the pitchbook is not an effective business development tool. If you're a marketing professional, you likely despise the pitchbook. If you're a lawyer, you are likely addicted to them. If you're a decision-maker, I suspect that you have seen more than your fair share of pitchbook-driven presentations over the years. Of course, there may be those of you who are exceptions to this rule. However, this blog post is meant for the unfortunate majority.

Many of our clients ask us to help them with presentation skills and we're more than happy to comply because this is an important skill to develop. But, there is a time and a place for 'presenting'. My contention is that presenting should be reserved for educating or training purposes. A 'pitch' meeting is not typically a forum for educating or training, but is a rare opportunity to make a connection with the client or prospective client. As consultants who provide a lot of training, we 'present' a lot. Even still, we try to make these presentations as interactive as possible, so the listener is engaged and contributes to the program. 'Presenting' should not be the word that comes to mind when preparing for a *business* meeting with a client or prospective client. 'Business' is a key concept when it comes to conducting meaningful *discussions* with clients or prospective clients. ***Conducting meaningful discussions is really the heart of this post.*** It is quite common to see lawyers talking for the first 20 minutes of a 'pitch' meeting about their law firm and/or their personal credentials without giving the client an opportunity to share their point(s) of view. This is valuable time lost. The lawyer may have demonstrated how proficient they are at remembering when their law firm was founded and how many global office locations they have, but they missed the boat when it comes to understanding the clients' needs and making a connection.

In order to have meaningful discussions with your clients or prospective clients, you must first understand their business. Rainmakers understand their clients' business, are immersed in their clients' industry, have developed the ability to share valuable insights on a topic relevant to the client, is able to engage clients or prospective clients in meaningful discussions, and rarely, if ever, 'presents'.

There are many ways to understand your clients' industry. A few examples follow:

- Talk to one of your colleagues who may have been in-house counsel at a company in a particular industry
- Leverage technology to track industry issues and trends
- Join an industry association
- Ask your clients what industry-specific publication they read and subscribe to it

There is so much information available at your fingertips these days. There is no excuse for walking into a meeting and (after your 20 minute soliloquy) asking the client "So, tell me, what is keeping you up at night?" If you ask this question and they haven't thrown you out of the office, they certainly thought of doing so and, in my opinion, they shouldn't have reconsidered.

Schedule a **business** meeting to have a meaningful **discussion** to share valuable **insights** with your clients or prospective clients and leave the pitchbook behind. You may be surprised at the results.

Share your personal experience with pitchbooks and presentations with us.

Has anyone had luck with pitchbooks? Do you think that having a conversation is more valuable to the decision-maker than listening to a presentation?

I'd be interested in hearing your perspective.