

Millennials and the Future of Business Development

By [LawVision](#) on October 21, 2016

As I reflect on a recent discussion among senior partners about which prospect or client to take golfing, I find myself thinking about how perhaps my generation might depart from this traditional method of business development and client relationship development. Nothing against golf, but we know from the statistics that golf among the younger generations is not the attraction it once was. But, golf aside, since I was simply using the sport as an iconic example of BD, I found myself wondering if the traditional methods of business development (used by lawyers to sell to their clients) are going to drastically change in the future with the generational shift, as millennials become not only the sellers, but the buyers of legal services.

In an effort to evaluate the impact the generational transition will have specifically on business development (whether it be coaching on business development, transitioning client relationships, etc.), I sampled some fellow millennials who are in various client services industries (entering heavy client-facing roles) about their opinions on how they will sell work in the future. They stated the following:

"That's easy. Philanthropy, networking, and serving on various boards that are entrenched in the community. Interpersonal relationships will always be huge and I consider them very classic in nature, but think our generation will excel as we are so connected through technology, making an even broader network possible." **Associate, AmLaw 100 Firm**

"Interesting question. I think it will likely be job/market specific. In my role, specifically M&A, those things like golf and sporting events still work and I believe they will in the future. A lot of business though is through connections. Social media and the internet provide the ability for people to find you and you to find them. At the end of the day, I'd say that nothing will replace those opportunities to foster a relationship outside of the actual workspace." **Advisory Manager, Big 4**

"Business development is going to revert back to more traditional relationships where there's mutual trust and respect. Wining and dining is going to increasingly seem a waste of company resources. Lessening that practice will be seen as an effective cost-cutting measure. It's not sustainable in the long run as by the time our generation is running companies, it will be seen as an unneeded expense." **Content Marketing Manager, Global Marketing Agency**

"I think the answer is twofold. In my opinion, while work products will be continuously refined and automated, the initial business agreement will never be purely technological in nature (i.e. connect on LinkedIn and get right to work). There is a trust factor that can only be earned by interpersonal relationships or a close friend's referral. I think technology will continue to develop and shrink the business world, but traditional methods of business development that are meant to build a solid foundation for a relationship to be nurtured, will not change dramatically. I do think that technology will create enormous client competition for these relationships though." **Associate AmLaw, 200 Firm**

"By nature, I think construction is more of a traditional work environment that's already well established & set in its ways. In turn, most people entering the workforce know what they're getting into, so I feel like the generational disconnect is minimized." **Senior Project Engineer, NYC**

"I think Golf remains an important business development tool as it is one of the few activities that guarantees almost unhindered time spent with a client or customer, for at least 4 to 5 hours. But even golf is evolving now with golf simulators and Top Golf. Additionally, alternative methods of networking are arising as activities like work out classes (spin, CrossFit) have been gaining traction in our space." **Senior Underwriter, Insurance Carrier**

The conclusion I drew was that personal connectivity (traditional business development), **plus** technological enhancements that greatly expand your network, are the future of business development. What are your thoughts on how the role of "traditional" business and client relationship development might evolve?