

## Selling Legal Services: A great listener begins with great questions

By [Jim Cranston](#) on March 28, 2013

Here's a scenario. You make an appointment to see a new doctor and after introducing herself, she immediately begins to pitch you on her services. Sound right? Of course not. There's a logical progression in communicating with others, especially in the sales process. I'm always amazed at how many attorneys immediately go into pitch mode which is not part of the natural sales progression.

Too many Rainmaking hopefuls automatically assume that business development means pitching. When, in actuality, business development actually means "listening". And listening begins with asking good questions. Listening and asking effective questions go hand in hand. The more effective your questions, the more business you'll obtain.

Here are a few suggestions on preparing for and getting the most out of your next business development meeting:

1. Think about what you want out of the meeting (what is your objective?). Then script out several questions prior to the meeting to pursue the line of inquiry you're interested in. Ask questions that will reveal a client's priorities, problems or initiatives.
2. Stimulate the conversation with a topic (or two). Consider inquiring about topics that align with your services (new legislation, regulations, trends, etc.) or relevant issues or projects the client is undertaking (based upon your research).
3. Ask follow up questions based on key words that the client uses. In essence, reiterate what you heard (acknowledging that you were paying attention) and reward the client's point of view by asking a follow up question that goes further into the subject matter.

By beginning with good questions, you're guaranteed to diagnose before you prescribe and ultimately end with favorable results.