

Stop Being a Sherpa and Start Being a Guide: How to Build Coaching Programs that Motivate your Lawyers to Sell

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Last month I sat on a panel at the Marketing Partner Forum in Naples, Florida with my colleague Silvia Coulter and Steve Bell, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer at Womble Carlyle. The title of the session was From Sherpa to Guide: Building Coaching Programs that Motivate your Lawyers to Sell. The discussion centered on how marketing and business development staff can raise their profile and effectiveness by coaching lawyers in a way that elevates their status as trusted resources at their respective firms.

We covered five topics:

1. **Leading with strengths.** Taking time to really understand the personality and strengths of those with whom you work so you can assist them in finding business development activities that will tap into their natural strengths. Leading with strengths increased comfort levels which increases amounts of time invested and success rates.
2. **Getting at the C-Suite.** Silvia shared an excellent example of a powerful CEO refusing to let his team ask for a discount on legal fees because of a personal relationship he had with the lead partner on a massive deal. Coaching people to form stronger relationships higher in the organization is a sound strategy and raises your own profile as well.
3. **Using Pipelines.** Centering business development activity on the pipeline moves lawyers away from static awareness activities (just writing an article or giving a speech) to dynamic relationship activities (meeting a new prospect or strengthening an existing relationship). Pipelines can help focus lawyers on next steps, assist in analyzing the depth and make-up of a lawyer's network and motivate lawyers to hit their goals. Steve distilled the essence of a pipeline artfully, "a pipeline is essentially a list of what just happened and what needs to happen next with each relationship"
4. **Move from Awareness to Relationships.** Most people we work with already speak, write, join and attend. Coaching at a higher level includes moving them from simple awareness activities to activities that find new and build existing relationships.
5. **Build Value Propositions.** It's not enough to just have your lawyers take people to lunch and keep in touch. It doesn't really matter how many ball games you take people to if you don't have something they need. Value propositions answer the question, "Why would I give you twenty minutes of my time." Help your lawyers create a value proposition that causes prospects to say, "That could help me, tell me more."

Steve made an interesting correlation between value propositions and the creation of products. His rules for creating products in professional services firms (the six "P"s) apply to value propositions as well. He suggested that when creating products or effective value propositions; ask yourself if they are Pitchable, Promotable, Packageable, Positionable, Predictable or Priceable.

Are you seen as a Sherpa or are you a Guide? Make sure your efforts both raise your lawyers' prospects and elevate your own status at the firm.

Craig Brown has worked with managing partners, attorneys, CEOs, and executives, as a coach, consultant and business executive for over 20 years. He is a Principal in the business development practice at LawVision where his consulting and training practice focuses on helping law firms rethink how to build clientele by reconnecting people to their core strengths.

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