The Four Ws of Business Development for Those Who Want to Take it to the Next Level

By Silvia L. Coulter on April 9, 2015

After two recent weeks of meetings with partners who are successful at business development and want to reach the next level of revenue generation, it occurs to me that sometimes people make it too difficult. Business development has four major elements: Who, What, Why and When. Here's the lowdown:

Who: Create a list of contacts—alum—law school and firm; inactive clients (connect with those you worked regardless if you were the relationship lawyer); active clients; inactive and active referral sources. Keep this list updated (or use our Contact Activity Tracker) and plan on connecting with these individuals quarterly. (By the way, Q4 is easy—holiday card with a handwritten note—no e-cards!). Add all these contacts to LinkedIn. Just do it.

What: Offer something of value quarterly. Repurpose articles, add presentations to Linked In; send emails with links to interesting and relevant articles; offer CLEs and other on-site seminars. Find a way to connect.

Why: Be clear about the benefits of reading the email you send or meeting with you and your partner(s). Before any outreach, answer the question, "Why am I reaching out to this person and what do I want the outcome to be?" This will help you to clarify your approach and your message.

When: The next step is always in your court. Even if they say they will connect with you. Don't wait. Be proactive. Clients tell us they begin to analyze your responsiveness, service standards and team attitude during the sales process. Make sure there is a timeframe for your next outreach with them. For those with whom you have not connected in a while, start slowly to rebuild the relationship.

Following the four Ws of business development will help you stay on track and focus on reaching the next level of revenue growth.