

The Many Paths to Business Development Success

By [Jim Cranston](#) on April 16, 2015

I get concerned when senior rainmakers give business development presentations to their firm's associates. Why? Because the message is often misconstrued by the audience. "Do it my way and you'll be successful" is what impressionable associates hear. The problem is . . . very few associates will share the same behavioral profile, skills, personalities, strengths, beliefs and social networks as the presenter. Even more important, times have changed (dramatically). I remember a very senior partner suggesting to his audience that they should join a bunch of boards. That may have worked 25 years ago, but I'd never put that strategy in my top ten ways to develop business today.

So, truth be told . . . there is no "one size fits all" when it comes to business development. In fact, there are so many different ways to be a successful business generator that I'd describe it more as an art, not a science. A few rules of thumb to consider as you contemplate your own strategy:

1. **Relationships drive business** – Continually work on building the relationships with clients and potential clients. People hire people who they like and trust.
2. **Stay top of mind with your network** – If clients and referral sources don't see you or hear from you occasionally, you're not staying top of mind. Always have a next step in your court to follow up. Social media like LinkedIn can help.
3. **Create value** – Seek out and be aware of issues that can/will allow you to create value for your contacts. Information you provide that helps a client or a prospect earns you the right to be considered for business in the future.
4. **Don't be afraid to ask** – Imply or suggest that it would be a pleasure to have the opportunity to work together. A subtle or direct interest in the possibility of working with one another will create opportunities that didn't exist before.