

What to Talk About at Your Next Business Development Lunch

By [Jim Cranston](#) on June 18, 2024

Navigating a business development lunch, especially with a pivotal figure like a new General Counsel (GC), can be a blend of excitement and apprehension. Recently, a client reached out to me, seeking guidance for an upcoming meeting with a former colleague who was the newly appointed GC of a significant potential client. Her anxiety was palpable, reflecting a sentiment many of us share when faced with high-stakes business development opportunities.

In response, I offered some guidance to help ease her tension and make the most of this opportunity:

1. **Start with Rapport Building:** Establishing a personal connection lays a solid foundation for meaningful conversation. Begin by exploring topics like family, hobbies, recent vacations, or any updates in their life. Building this rapport fosters a comfortable atmosphere conducive to open dialogue.
2. **Next – Explore the GC's Role:** Express genuine interest in their new position. Ask about their experiences so far, current projects, priorities for the year, and any surprises they've encountered. Delve deeper into areas that align with your interests or the services your firm offers. Look for opportunities where you can add value or provide insights.
3. **Reciprocate Interest:** Anticipate the GC's curiosity about your role and accomplishments. If they don't inquire, gracefully segue the conversation to share notable matters or innovative projects from your work or your firm's initiatives. Alternatively, propose collaborative opportunities such as webinars, panels, articles, or diversity initiatives to sustain the dialogue beyond the lunch meeting.
4. **Lastly – Offer Assistance:** Closing the conversation with a genuine offer of help can leave a lasting impression. Ask if there's anything you can do to support their objectives or address any challenges they're facing. If the interaction has been positive, subtly express your interest in collaborating with them in the future, planting the seed for potential opportunities.

Navigating business development lunches requires a delicate balance of professionalism and authenticity. By prioritizing relationship-building, mutual curiosity, and genuine offers of support, you can transform these encounters into valuable connections that benefit both parties in the long run.

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