

THE ART OF MAKING RAIN



Seven Steps That Give Associates an Edge

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Few people go to law school with the intention of pursuing a career in sales. But once you join a law firm, you learn that selling your services, and the firm's, is a significant component in the business of law. Learning rainmaking skills early on will help you seal more deals in your career.

Lawyers with the biggest books of business almost always make the most money, have the most power in the firm and enjoy the greatest allocation of the firm's resources. The personal benefits are also plentiful. Rainmaking is a source of intellectual stimulation, self-esteem, wide-ranging recreation and close friendships.

Still, while the importance of becoming a rainmaker may seem obvious, there are many obstacles. There is the typical lack of interest in (or even hostility to) selling. Then there is the ubiquitous pressure for billable hours. As an associate, you may lack information regarding effective strategies. Firms usually have limited resources dedicated to associate marketing. Even tougher, the culture of the firm may not support marketing at all. So, it is easy to procrastinate. But keep in mind that the process of becoming a rainmaker may take many years.

Not every lawyer needs to become a big-time rainmaker. Many are satisfied with servicing the clients brought in by other lawyers. Certainly this can produce a rewarding career and meaningful income. However, the risk of relying on other lawyers in the firm for your business is great. At any moment, lawyers who supply work could leave for other pastures, become ill or retire. They may also assign work to younger associates who bill at lower rates.

In contrast, the business benefits of being a rainmaker are obvious.



Consequently, if it is at all of interest to you, you should do as much as you can—and as soon as possible—to build your level of involvement.

Here are rainmaking seeds that even new associates can begin to plant immediately.

1 Connect with Knowledgeable People in Your Firm The first step for associates who want to become rainmakers is to identify the current resources made available through the firm. If your firm has a marketing department, start with the people there. Take them to lunch. Ask them for their guidance.

Let them know about your areas of legal involvement. Proactively telling them that you are interested in rainmaking may result in their giving you some valuable attention.

Of course, it is also important to spend time with the rainmakers of the firm. Here again, let them know that you are interested in developing your rainmaking skills. Whenever it's appropriate, ask to attend their meetings with prospects. Although experienced rainmakers may use techniques that may seem difficult or inappropriate for your situation, watching them in action as well as soliciting their feedback will help you design your plans for the future.

2 Participate in Firm-Based Marketing Initiatives Your firm probably conducts seminars. Even if you can't present at them, be sure to attend. Try to meet as many attendees as possible and begin to build connections for the future.

If the firm sends out newsletters or has a blog, make contributions. If the policy is to limit article writing to partners, offer to coauthor with a partner or to assist with background research. Create a file for potential article ideas. As you work on matters or read articles that spark your interest, add them to the file. Over time, that process may help you identify a topic that motivates you to publish your own articles. (More on that in tip 4.)

Also, if your firm purchases tickets for events, sign up to get on the list of recipients. And don't be quick to judge which are the less-desirable events. One of our clients felt discouraged when he ended up with box-seat tickets to the

circus, instead of seats for the sporting events that he wanted. However, he had some prospects who had children, so he invited them to come with their children and brought his own children along. As a result, he had a great time *and* got a meaningful client.

3 Keep Meeting New Contacts Rainmakers need mechanisms for regularly meeting new people. Professional and trade organizations are among the best environments for meeting good prospects. Identify which organizations your firm currently supports, and if the budget allows, attend the organizations' meetings with other lawyers.

Be sure to become active in your bar association because other lawyers are the main resource for many rainmakers. Also, attending bar events and CLE programs is a great way to blend professional development with practice development.

In addition, you may want to expand your horizons and consider the trade organizations of current clients. Think about trade organizations that represent activities that are particularly interesting to you. And (although more difficult) try to identify organizations whose members may be positioned to experience a dramatic surge in growth over the next five years.

You may consider charitable, religious or community organizations and events, too.

As you make your choices, however, remember that the key to any organization's effectiveness in rainmaking terms is the concentration of good prospects. Getting the firm to sponsor your involvement in an

organization requires that you have the ability to demonstrate that it is a good investment. As the number of prospects increases, the cost per prospect decreases. Accordingly, be careful about organizations that hold the appearance of quality networking but are populated with non-prospects. Organizational involvement can take up a lot of time. A poor choice of organizations will not only waste resources (in both time and money), but may also sour your interest in rainmaking.

4 Write Articles for Outside Publications

Articles support rainmaking in important ways. While they may not motivate a reader to call and retain you, they do help build reputations and reinforce relationships. When clients and referral sources read an article written by you, they are reminded of your expertise and pleased to see your name in the publications they read. The article validates their decision to work with you. Also, you may add credibility as an authority to your sales meetings and proposals by including a reprint of your article in the materials.

Associates should write at least one article per year. Getting published may be as simple as giving your article to someone in your marketing department for distribution to periodical editors. If you don't have a marketing department, send the article to the editors of the trade publications your clients and referral sources read. You may be surprised how much demand there is for your work.

5 Develop Your Speaking Skills

Speaking at conferences, association programs and similar events is one of the most effective ways of meeting new prospects. If you

feel comfortable with your expertise on a topic, offer to speak to audiences of prospects as often as possible.

If you have done your homework regarding trade associations, contact them and identify the program chair. Find out their policies regarding inviting speakers. Ask about topics that might be of interest to their membership. Let them know about topics you think they might find interesting.

If you are uncomfortable with giving speeches, consider taking some classes or joining Toastmasters.

6 Stay Connected

You should keep in touch with all colleagues and acquaintances who could become clients or referral sources.

“Because staying connected is so important, learn how to manage all your contacts.”

Maintain e-mail contact. Consider a personal blog. Have the names of your contacts added to the firm's mailing database so everyone receives firm communications. Holiday cards, birthday cards and notes of congratulations are good techniques for keeping in touch, too. In addition, consider hosting an annual party, which is a fun way to maintain connections. You can also suggest that people invite their other business contacts to increase your network.

Because staying connected is so important, learn how to manage all your contacts. Contact management is a process of maintaining a database of information along with a mechanism for ensuring follow-up. Plus, as you document information about your prospects, you will be reminded of more reasons to stay in touch. Most lawyers have Outlook as a basic contact management system, and there are many more sophisticated software programs. Of course, there is no value to the software if you don't enter the data.

7 Invest Five Minutes in Strategy Management

One of the best things you can do to build a foundation for rainmaking is to

develop a heightened awareness of how to identify opportunities as they cross your path. We recommend investing five minutes every day in thinking about the strategies you want to implement and the people you want to pursue. This process will increase the number of ideas that come to mind.

The amount of time you commit to rainmaking will vary with the other demands on your time, and the level of importance you place on becoming a rainmaker. As you get more involved, you will find there are many techniques that will surprise you with the success they produce. You may even be surprised at how enjoyable the process can be.

What is most important is getting started. It takes years to establish your reputation. It takes years for your contacts to obtain the authority to hire counsel. Since the process is so long, it's a good idea to remember the proverb: The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time is now. ^{1P}

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