

By the Book

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Selling in Your Comfort Zone: Safe and Effective Strategies for Developing New Business

by Robert N. Kohn and Lawrence M. Kohn (ABA, 2009)

When I first came across a promotion for yet another new book on sales strategies for lawyers, I admit to being a bit skeptical. How would this book be different from other excellent guidebooks on the topic already on my shelves?

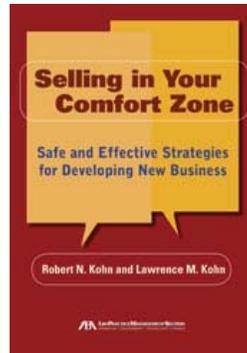
Then I noticed the authors were **Robert and Lawrence Kohn**, brothers and founders of Kohn Communications, who've been providing marketing and sales consulting and training services to lawyers and other professionals since 1985. That piqued my interest enough to obtain a copy and see what they had to say. I quickly learned the book is targeted to those who want to improve their selling skills, but are decidedly uncomfortable with the concept. The authors' primary goal is to help readers understand and overcome this aversion by addressing their reluctance and taking action in specific ways that keep them within their personal comfort zone. As the Kohns point out, learning about *how* to sell won't help lawyers who hate the idea; it's too easy to avoid doing things we don't like, even if we recognize the need to do them. But the more comfortable we become, the more willing we are to take action.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I first helps readers understand the reasons for their personal discomfort in developing business. Among the 28 common reasons addressed are lack of time, the risk of rejection, the risk of failure, the belief that selling is unethical, lack of support from your firm, introversion or shyness, not knowing where to begin, and limited experience. The authors then outline the many benefits of overcoming these specific obstacles, including increased revenue, power, freedom, job security, self-esteem, better clientele, momentum, team spirit, enjoyment, intellectual gratification, and the satisfaction of doing well by doing good.

Part II provides 11 proven strategies that will help you stay in your comfort zone. These range from the more commonly recommended—such as how to identify the best organizations to join and how to identify your targets—to the more creative—such as how to communicate value to potential clients and how to give “value-in-advance.” Also covered are comfortable techniques for meeting new people and developing painless systems to stay in touch.

Part III provides eight skills modules containing over 100 concrete tips on implementing specific selling skills in safe and effective ways. Included are tips on overcoming the fear of public speaking, conducting effective seminars, client satisfaction surveys, effective and affordable PR, working a room, time management, and more. Sprinkled throughout the book are text boxes with key ideas and “comfort zone tasks” to take on.

The authors fully address every excuse lawyers make, every obstacle they throw up to avoid engaging in effective business development. Lawyers at all practice levels—and marketing professionals responsible for their training—can benefit from the practical tools and solutions presented in this guidebook. Also included is an accompanying CD containing useful forms, worksheets, and checklists to enhance the learning process.



To learn more about this book and review its table of contents and a sample chapter, visit the [ABA Web Store](#).

I asked Bob and Larry to tell me more about their work coaching lawyers. Here's what they said:

Q: *One of the myths you dispel in this book is that introverts can't interact well with others so don't have the skills to bring in business. How do you assure a lawyer with this personality trait that he or she can be a successful rainmaker?*

RK: I don't think that anyone is more qualified to answer this question than me. I am an introvert and yet I have learned how to sell in my comfort zone. The myth that introverts can't interact well with others simply isn't true. Many of the lawyers we coach are introverts and are highly skilled in selling. In some cases, they are even passionate about it. The important thing to understand about introverts is that while they may enjoy spending time alone, they can also thrive in social situations.

What I tell a lawyer in this situation is you don't have to change your personality to market successfully—you don't need to tell jokes or be the life of the party. What you need is to find the right environments in which to market, and to develop dialogue that comfortably reveals the value you offer.

Q: *What would you say is the most common reason you hear for avoiding business development?*

LK: By far, the most common reason we hear is lack of time. Lawyers almost always say they are too busy to market. But, this is a dangerous belief because no matter how busy you are, things change. Clients leave or go out of business. Fortunately, there are ways of making time for marketing such as improved delegation and organization.

These skills are covered in the book. But, more significantly, your belief about lack of time may be masking the real problem—namely, you don't like selling. Like most people, you're probably afraid of rejection. Maybe you're afraid of appearing weak and needy. Or, you don't want to impose on others. These are normal concerns. The solutions presented in the book involve developing greater confidence in the value you offer, confidence in the quality of your contacts, and confidence in your ability to communicate value in a way that fits your personal style.

Q: *You've been coaching lawyers for over 20 years. Have you found the obstacles they are facing today different?*

RK: Yes, there are some differences. One obstacle is that there are so many more techniques for marketing today. When we started coaching lawyers in marketing there was no Internet, no e-mail, no social networking, no Web sites, Webcasts, or blogs. These tools create more opportunities and more challenges. For example, when you send e-mail, you may be blocked. Or, the recipient may get so much e-mail on a regular basis that your message goes unnoticed.

Another difference is that most law firms are now engaged in marketing. This means more competition. When we started, there were no marketing departments. In fact, when we started, very few lawyers appreciated the importance of marketing. I think that the trend of legal marketing is going to continue to expand and the profession will become increasingly competitive.

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