

Leverage Summer Months to Grow Network

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With the Summer months upon us, it is too easy to be lulled into a sense of complacency and slack off on targeted business development initiatives. Avoid the temptation and leverage these next several months with a concentrated effort to build and strengthen your network.

Contact lists - - - gotta have them...and you should be growing them.

If there is one element in the business develop arsenal which is fatal to ignore or not attend to faithfully, it is the contact list. This is and will be the foundation of your practice for many years ahead. Why, you may ask? Well, put simply: no list equals no connections and communications with friends, peers, industry contacts, prospects and ultimately, no clients.

In my practice, particularly with newer attorneys, I hear consistently: "I do not have a list, how (or why) do a get one?" and "I don't know anyone to add to a list" Unless you live in a cave on a deserted island, you have all the tools you need to grow your own quality contact list.

To be clear, a contact list should be comprised of a group of people who are interested, engaged and willing to both talk about and share your messages. These most likely will include:

- Friends and family
- School classmates (law school, college, high school, etc.)
- Peers and former co-workers
- Contacts from former clerkships
- Professional contacts (YLD members, Chamber YP contacts, etc.)
- Association contacts
- Community contacts
- Holiday card recipients, and so on

In short, most people with whom you come in contact who also have a network of contacts.

Living in the age of social media, it has never been easier to develop a network, professional and personal. We all "know" people and they "know" people, etc. Point being, it is imperative to "collect" contacts as you move along your career, even as early as "day one" as a lawyer.

Collecting names in and of itself is useless, but rather, how you get and stay connected is the real

prize. Old-time thinking of others has not gone out of style and is an effective means of cultivating relationships with others who may be in a position to direct refer you new business and/or introduce you to new prospects.

In our hyper-busy work lives, time is of the very essence so we must be highly intentional of reaching out to our networks. Email marketing programs such as Constant Contact, Mail Chimp, Vertical Response and others are a highly effective tool to send a quick Legal Alert and/or e-newsletter to an email distribution list of many of your contacts on a regular basis. Once you create the email template, it literally can take less than five minutes to import content and send a communicate out to your contact list.

Too many lawyers I coach sadly make the mistake of omission of not focusing on their list as soon as they start their legal career. Five or more years later when they realize they need to concentrate on expanding their network and educate their contacts to the legal services they provide, they find that they can't put the "toothpaste back into the tube" of individuals with whom they have lost touch.

It is critical to develop a clean, accurate and precise contact list in order to engage in specific marketing initiatives such as sending out e-newsletters, direct mail campaigns, blogging, seminars, trade show conferences, any anywhere you want to demonstrate your area of expertise and communicate directly in front of those individuals who may retain you directly and/or refer you to others.

During the Summer months, pace yourself with actively attending targeted networking events, and then go with a positive spirit of meeting and engaging new contacts productively. There are so many nuances to networking effectively that we all can learn from but suffice it to say that if you are talking more than you are listening, you are not optimizing your networking time.

To leverage your networking time, be sure to have a plan in place to follow up with each new contact within 1-2 days following the event with a simple email to stay on their radar. If you deem that someone who you met may have little value to you, keep in mind that, at this point, you do not yet know the extent of their network. Do not undervalue the strength of the extrapolating value of networking. For sure, we are all living in a "linked in" world and it can be amazingly powerful for helping you build and grow a prosperous practice.

Take advantage of the Summer months to get and stay connected with your growing network. It is one of the most impactful business development initiatives in which you can engage.

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