

Rainmaker 101: Three Strong Tips from a Top Producer

Article By:

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One of the best ways to grow your legal practice in today's competitive environment is to learn from one of the best. This past year I was fortunate enough to interview Mitchell Roth, Managing Partner of [Much Shelist](#). Mr. Roth was kind enough to share some best practices that helped him make rain over the past 20 years. Here are a few highlights from our interview and a few of my suggestions to help with execution.

Mitch's Tip #1: Develop your network early in your career

One of the first things that Mr. Roth recommends for young attorneys is to start developing your network early in your career. In my experience, one of the mistakes made by young attorneys is to join "just any" networking group. While this might help to get your name out there, it is not very focused and your success may be limited. It makes more sense to do your research and join an association, charity or a niche' networking group where you can meet others with similar interests or ideals. Try to find a cause or interest that you are passionate about. For example, if you are a huge proponent of stopping world hunger, look for a non-profit board to sit on that directly relates to that cause. Or if you were enthralled with your college experience, join an alumni group in the city where you practice.

In my experience working with young attorneys, they typically start growing their networks too late. For every reason not to get involved in networking, there are ten better reasons to start right away. Working hard and billing hours is job number one; however, many of these events and meetings are done before or after business hours. It's important to stop making excuses and instead, simply make the effort.

By doing research, speaking to your mentors and finding a cause that you can get behind, networking will become much more focused and even enjoyable. Also, don't buy into the hype that your job is to sell the people that you meet. It isn't! The goal is to connect with quality people with whom you can help in protecting their business interests. It's also critical to build relationships people with whom you can refer and who can refer you. Developing strong strategic partners is one of the best ways to grow your book of business.

Mitch's Tip #2: Develop a written plan for your practice

Another powerful suggestion provided by Mitch was directed to the more experienced attorneys who are interested in dramatically growing their books of business. His suggestion is simple, yet most attorneys do not execute on the development of a written plan. This plan would outline a specific course of action to make business development more focused and therefore less intimidating to accomplish.

In order to get a better handle on writing a business plan, we should break the plan down into three easy steps.

First, determine what your goal or objective is. For example, “I will hit \$500,000 in originations by November 2016.” By writing your objective in a positive way, it will reinforce your belief in obtaining the goal on a conscious and subconscious level.

Second, plot out a few strategies that will help you obtain this objective. For example, “I will leverage existing clients to obtain high level quality introductions.” Or “I will attend focused networking events to meet new potential clients and strategic partners.”

Third, break your strategies down into actionable pieces that you can execute. For example, “I will review my contacts list break down my existing contacts into A, B & C relationships. I will have this completed by Dec 31st 2016.” You should have a number of tactics that relate back to your strategies and how you will accomplish them.

Mitch’s Tip #3: Be a great lawyer FIRST!

In order to be a great business developer, you must first be a great lawyer. It’s impossible to get real “buy in” from a prospective client when you don’t understand the law yourself. Most attorneys believe the key to making it rain is by holding a pitch meeting. However, in my experience, it’s much more important to be an expert at questioning, rather than presenting. Your ability to ask good questions and properly QUALIFY the prospective client will mean the difference between success and failure in building a larger book of business.

For example, let’s say that you’re meeting with the General Counsel at a Mid-Market manufacturing company. She tells you that her issue is, “Our existing firm is very slow to return calls and react to our requests.” Most attorneys would hear this and react like a supper bell just went off! Like me, attorneys are problem solvers and never want to pause before jumping in to save the day.

The better way to handle this situation would be to ask a good follow up question and then ZIP the LIPS! My idea of a good follow up question would be, “That’s unfortunate. Tell me more about that?” Then, let the prospective client talk and talk some more. While there are scores of good questions to ask after the one I’ve given, it’s important to not sell, pitch or SOLVE. You will get more value from your time with a prospect when you ask, listen and ask some more, rather than providing free consulting. All prospects are looking to feel understood and listened to, not sold to.

A special “Thank You,” to Mitch Roth of [Much Shelist](#) who understands the importance of being a great lawyer first, having a solid plan to work from and developing a solid network of relationships to help grow a legal practice.

To hear Mitch Roth’s full interview, please go [here](#).

Part two, click [here](#).

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