

somewhat of a homebody and like to spend time hanging out with my husband, drinking wine, and trying to catch up on sleep. Slow flow vinyasa yoga has greatly improved every aspect of my life. You should try it!



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## Professional Development

# Tailoring Your Business Development Efforts for Greater Return

By Marianne Trost, The Women Lawyers Coach



Have you ever asked yourself, "If I do everything in business development that I am supposed to do, how will I ever find the time to bill?" If so, you are not alone. One size does not fit all and there are not enough hours in the day to do it all. The following tips will help you tailor your business development, so you can achieve a greater return on your investment of time, money and effort.

**Customize your approach.** Not everyone should be doing everything in business development in equal measure. Business development is about relationships, i.e., connecting with people, cultivating rapport and trust, uncovering potential legal needs, offering to fill those needs, doing an outstanding job filling those needs, and serving as an ongoing resource. How you cultivate those relationships should be a mixture of the things that attract the types of clients you are seeking. Go where your clients go. Do they network? Do they read certain publications? Do they attend specific annual conferences? Do they serve on community boards? Are they members of your firm's internal committees who refer work across offices? Are they attorney referral sources who attend bar association events? Are they contacts in other states who attend DRI's Women in the Law conference? Customize your efforts so that your time is spent interacting with your clients or people who can connect you to potential clients including referrals sources.

**Set clear goals and revisit them at least once a year.** Taking the time upfront to think through what kind of clients you want to work with, what type of industry you want to penetrate, what type of work you want to be doing, where your potential clients gather, what your

potential clients read, is key to discerning whether your business development activities are aligned with your goals and worth your time. While it may seem like this is a time-consuming task, you will save substantial hours when you are able to align your goals with your business development activities and not get sidetracked on things that do not line up with what you want to achieve.

**Select your activities wisely.** Think through your strengths and align them with business development activities that tap into your natural skills set. If you can draft an informative four paragraph article in a few hours that you can send to potential clients who will find it of value, great. However, if it takes you multiple days to draft something and there isn't much of an audience for it, writing may not be the best use of your time. If you relate to people better in smaller, more personalized settings, consider hosting a breakfast briefing or attending a CLE with an in-house counsel contact. If you have the ability to connect with people you have never met, put yourself out there at networking events where your potential clients engage. If you are the type of person who remembers the little things, keep a list of birthdays, special events, and details that you can tap into to create an avenue of thoughtful engagement with your contacts. Integrating your strengths into your business development activities will make your time more efficient, effective and authentic.

**Do fewer things and do them well.** More is not always better. Consider the following two scenarios. Jackie registers for a networking event, reaches out ahead of time to connect with potential attendees, sets a goal of meeting two new quality contacts while at the event, also identifies two people she would like to introduce at the event, fully

engages while on site, and then follows up afterwards. She does this every time she registers for an event. By the end of the year, she will have added 20-30-40 new quality contacts to her business development network and be well on her way to cultivating those relationships successfully.

Alison also registers for a networking event. She attends three times the number of events that Jackie does, is usually rushed before attending, figures out what she's going to do when she gets there, collects business cards as she works the crowd, and when she gets back to her office she intends to follow up but gets swept away with billable work. By the end of the same year, she may have added more names to her contact list than Jackie, but she won't be nearly as far along as Jackie in cultivating the type of meaningful relationships that lead to referrals, introductions, opportunities, or new clients. Investing time in fewer things and doing them well, actually saves time in the long run.

**Keep the momentum going.** Part of making business development work for you is finding ways to keep the momentum going even when you don't have time. The reality is that most business development relationships can stay current with a simple ping (*i.e.*, an email, an article, a link to a blog post, an invitation, a social media post, an introduction, etc.) every three months. Before you read something, ask yourself, "Is there anyone else I know who would find this article interesting?" Then send it to them. When you receive an invitation to a conference or event, ask yourself "Is there anyone else I know who would find this event of value?" Then invite them. If you are headed into trial for six weeks, consider sending an email that lets your contact know you would like to get together and you will circle back after you get out of trial. This simple email will keep the momentum going and set the stage for you to not only follow up and schedule, but potentially let your contact know you won the case! Keeping your relationships current is actually less time consuming and less difficult

than finding ways to get back in touch with relationships that have gone dormant, coming up with "excuses" to reach out to someone you have not spoken with for two years, or searching for new relationships that will need to be cultivated from scratch because you have let the ones you had languish.

**Stay fluid and modify the plan when needed.** Keep in mind that the very best rainmakers recognize that business development is fluid and has to fit into the ebb and flow of a day, or it won't happen. They may attend only two days of a three-day conference, but they do the prep, the active engagement and the follow up. They may not have time to draft an article, but they are on the lookout for one that someone else has written that they can send as a way to keep the momentum going. They may not be able to set up lunch immediately, but they let their contact know they have not forgotten and they will circle back in six weeks. The next time you are tempted to skip business development because you were not able to stick with your original plan, consider modifying the plan to meet your needs.

**Conclusion.** As you look for ways to increase the effectiveness of your business development, look beyond the standard check list of activities and instead consider tailoring your efforts to best utilize your strengths, align with your potential client base, and fit into the demands of your practice. Customizing your approach will save time in the long run and help you stretch your business development hours farther for greater return.

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## A Faster Way to Grow Your Career

By Bridget Grimes



As women professionals, how we manage our business or career makes a tremendous difference to our financial success. First, it affects your ability to fund the goals that are important to you. Second, it affects your current quality of

life. Unfortunately, most women executives do not consider how management of their business or career affects their financial planning at all. How could they? There is little or no time for themselves, let alone time for business or career strategy.