

# Rainmaking

SUSAN SALTONSTALL DUNCAN ■ PERSONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

## A Three-Step Plan to Develop More Business

**W**ith the exception of a very few “born rainmakers” who appear to generate new contacts and clients effortlessly, most of us aren’t able to develop new business without devising some type of plan. Don’t be fooled: Successful rainmakers do follow a disciplined process of setting goals and proactively pursuing networking, reputation-building and relationship activities.

There are at least two reasons to make your plan right away. First, too many people engage in “random acts of marketing” with little or no results. In other words, you waste many hours and efforts on approaches and outings that don’t lead to new business when you don’t have goals, targets or outcomes on which to focus.

Second, being proactive in your approach to business development helps you better enjoy the process and gain control over the kind of practice you will have. How? Because you can identify the type of work you like best, your favorite clients and other interests that you enjoy, and then match those with the type of

work and clients you will seek.

Your success, of course, depends on building a strategy that is unique to *you*, one in which you focus on your distinctive strengths, relationships and opportunities. There are three steps involved in planning your personal marketing success.

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### STEP 1

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#### Assessment: Consider Your Past and Your Present

Before you devise goals, you need to take stock of where you’ve been and where you are at now in your practice, your client base, your skill sets and your marketplace. Think about the following things.

■ **Existing or recent clients.** Identify your favorite clients, what type of cases and other matters have been the most challenging or satisfying, and what has made them so. Determine how much you really know about your clients’ demographics, positions, industries, personal or business objectives and how your legal counsel fits into those objectives.

■ **Practice expertise and marketplace.** Assess the service areas in which you are most actively involved. Have these increased or decreased in the past few years? Where will the greatest growth for your practice be (new client types, new niches or industries, new services) in another three years? Try to

project how business, demographic, economic or legislative trends will negatively or positively affect you.

■ **Competitive position.** There are a lot of qualified lawyers out there scrambling for the same business. At the same time, it’s often difficult for clients to distinguish one lawyer from another. To differentiate yourself from the pack, you need to be knowledgeable about your competitors—who they are, whether there are non-lawyers among them and what their competitive advantage or disadvantage is.

■ **Marketing tactics.** Not everyone enjoys or is good at the same types of marketing. Review the time you have spent on past marketing efforts, and make your best guess as to why those efforts have succeeded or failed. Have topics been geared to the right audience, that is, the decision makers and individuals who hire you or refer clients your way? How and how often do you follow up after an event, a speech or an article? Lastly, how and from whom do you get your clients, and how and to whom do you market yourself?

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### STEP 2

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#### Goal Setting: Where You Should Go from Here

Once you’ve taken stock of your ideal clients, your practice strengths, the marketplace and where you’ll have



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the greatest opportunities (or threats) in the next several years, you are ready to set some goals. Remember that your business goals should be informed by the marketplace but should also reflect your personal values, aims and passions.

Essentially, the more you can strive to get work that you enjoy, clients with whom you share common interests, and involvement in networking or civic activities that genuinely matter to you, the more fun you'll have and the more effective you'll be at marketing and growing your practice.

■ **Set goals for a 12-month period.** Include financial and quantifiable goals (number of billable hours, new client origination, cross-selling and so forth) and other practice development and marketing goals (increasing skills in a niche, broadening the referral source base, becoming active in a specific civic activity and the like). Whatever else you do as you set your goals and your action steps, make sure they are "SMART":

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**chievable  
**R**ealistic  
**T**ime-specific

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### STEP 3

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#### **Action: Devise the Steps You Will Take to Get There**

How do you identify the steps that will help you achieve your goals?

Every step you take, event you attend and person you call should have some direct relationship to your goals. If you want to build business with a specific industry sector, for example, you can target your efforts at reaching clients and prospects in that industry through trade or special interest busi-

ness groups, publications and conferences. (If you don't know which groups or publications to target, ask your clients.) If a local bar association calls to ask you to give an update on your area of law for all the other lawyers in your area (your direct competitors), please say no!

There are many approaches and venues that might work for you as you devise your plan. Here are strategies to consider.

■ **Client development and retention.** This involves efforts to improve service to and communication with clients to ensure satisfaction, expand representation, ensure repeat business and facilitate cross-selling. It may include entertainment, written communications, client satisfaction surveys and making connections for clients.

■ **Internal marketing.** If you are in a firm of more than three or four lawyers, your plan might address marketing to and with colleagues. Get to know their practices, find out about their clients and look for areas of mutual interest in your respective marketing goals.

■ **Prospect and referral-source targeting.** One-to-one relationship marketing may be done with clients, prospective clients, lawyers in your firm or other firms, and other potential referral sources such as accountants, real estate agents or bankers. Always focus first on people you know, people your clients know or people others you know know. Make lists, meet with individuals, and ask questions to research prospects and market needs. These relationships should provide mutual value. They will likely take time to nurture.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This issue marks the debut of Susan Duncan's new column focused on personal business development strategies. If you have questions or ideas about how individual lawyers can attract new business, please send an e-mail to [sduncan@rainmakingoasis.com](mailto:sduncan@rainmakingoasis.com). Susan formerly wrote *Law Practice's* Fresh Out column. Her new Rainmaking column will appear in these pages every other issue.

■ **Visibility and reputation building.** Many rainmakers garner success by becoming known as the expert, or the "go-to" person, on a specific issue. The right way to raise your visibility will depend on your targets, what those targets read or want to know, where they go and on what basis they make decisions. You may need to do some research to understand your targets' "buying habits." Among the common approaches to reputation building are speeches, newsletters, articles, blogs, e-mail alerts, media relations and advertising (in print and other media). You also need to ensure that your firm's Web site includes your most current bio, practice area description and article reprints.

■ **Networking activities.** Last but not least, consider becoming involved in any of a number of professional, trade, civic, community, political or professional activities. You should, of course, evaluate each activity in the context of your personal, professional and marketing goals.

#### **Develop the Marketing Mind-set**

If you really want to be successful, you must make business development part of your daily routine. Try to focus on things you enjoy and take one step every day. Find a marketing buddy or mentor with whom to share goals, successes and failures. Update your plan at least once a year—or more often as you find new opportunities. And always keep your ears open for market changes and client needs. ■