Business Development Tips for Lawyers During COVID-19

As the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect pretty much every aspect of daily life, many lawyers wonder whether engaging in business development activities is a good idea right now. It’s a reasonable dilemma, as the idea of asking people for business feels overly opportunistic and unseemly in a time of economic upheaval and recession.

While lawyers must be sensitive to the current situation, it is absolutely appropriate to pursue business development even now. Prospective clients still need guidance and support as well as legal counsel they can rely on.

The critical question right now is:

How should lawyers engage in business development without coming across as pushy and distasteful?

Just like every industry has had to adjust to contend with the coronavirus pandemic, the legal industry is adapting its methods as well. Normally, business development with prospective clients occurs during face-to-face meetings which usually involve traveling to a client’s office or meeting for coffee, dinner, or other events. However, as many prospective clients are justifiably concerned about being exposed to the virus, face-to-face meetings are extremely challenging right now.

As a result, in the “new normal” lawyers must connect with prospective clients through virtual means like Zoom, Skype, and other apps. Even though virtual conversations lack a personal feel, these limited interactions are increasingly common.

The pandemic has also influenced how law firms develop business from their existing clients. Instead of regular in-person meetings with key clients, attorneys have to conduct such meetings via Skype or Zoom. While these meetings definitely lack the personal touch of in-person interactions, they still allow attorneys and clients to maintain contact.

Some law firms have also been embracing pro bono work to keep busy with legal matters and help out clients who cannot afford legal services.

Tips for Business Development During the Pandemic

Relationships Are Key

It’s a tale as old as time—people participate in business activities with those they know, like, and trust. And the best way to create and maintain the “know, like, and trust factor” is to develop and nurture relationships.

Reach out to existing clients solely to check on them and wish them and their families well. This is the right time to keep your eyes off the “prize” and just connect. Reaching out to others is appropriate no matter the circumstances and will deepen and strengthen your relationships.

Get Creative

Despite these uncertain times, find creative ways to stay connected with people in your network. While large gatherings are forbidden and face-to-face coffees, lunches, and happy hours are not an option, don’t use the quarantine as an excuse to let relationships atrophy. Use phone calls and video chats to have one-on-one conversations and small group gatherings.

Meet New People

Meeting new people during a pandemic might sound like a fool’s errand but it’s easier than you would expect. You can easily expand your network while working from home. Not by sending out uninvited LinkedIn messages or cold emails pushing your law practice—instead, reach out and connect with people you have common interests with or you want to learn more about. It can result in a positive response.

Anticipate Your Clients’ Needs

As an attorney, a part of your job is to anticipate any business and legal challenges arising for your clients. Rather than waiting for things to happen, put yourself into your clients’ shoes and look ahead to predict any roadblocks.

Also, make sure your clients know you are prepared to help them navigate the road ahead. Send your clients alerts containing valuable information and tips. Try a more intimate approach and identify the clients who would benefit from the alert, then reach out to them by phone and point them to a specific portion of the alert that concerns their unique situation.