

Play to Win

[**Build Communities, Build Business**](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/build-communities-build-business/)

By [Sally J. Schmidt](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/author/sally-j-schmidt/) | Nov.18.13 | [Business Development](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/category/business-development/), [Daily Dispatch](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/category/articles/), [Law Practice Management](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/category/practice-management-2/), [Legal Marketing](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/category/legal-marketing-2/), [Play to Win](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/category/play-to-win/)



I have long believed that one of the most effective ways to build business is to build communities. And, with the popularity of social media, this view has only been reinforced.

Seth Godin, the popular author and speaker, [uses the term “tribes.”](http://www.indiebound.org/book/9781591842330) He says human beings have always been part of tribes, which he defines as follows: “A tribe is a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader and connected to an idea. A group needs only two things to be a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate.”

**How Creating Communities Brings Business to Your Law Practice**

How does this concept translate to your marketing and business development activities? In myriad ways! Here are but a few examples of ways to create and lead communities, or tribes, that can contribute immeasurably to your marketing and business development success.

* **A client advisory board.** Bring together key clients or referral sources to give you advice, whether as a firm, a practice or industry group (e.g., contractors on a construction industry advisory board) or even an activity (e.g., a class-action symposium advisory board).
* **A suite of services.** Gather together “members” or “patrons” who receive exclusive rights to a range of value-added services, such as seminars, webinars, e-alerts and a list serve.
* **A LinkedIn or Google+ group.** Create a forum where like-minded people (e.g., risk managers) can share ideas and questions. You moderate, respond and invite participation.
* **Twitter.** What easier way to create a tribe than to gather and engage with followers on Twitter?
* **Study groups.** Set up and manage a substantive study group of colleagues, friendly competitors and referral sources to share thoughts on the latest estate-planning techniques, for example.
* **Social groups.** How about organizing a quarterly happy hour with your favorite law school alums?
* **A roundtable or network.** Invite people with the same job title (e.g., HR managers) or the same challenges (e.g., family business owners) in noncompeting enterprises to get together on a regular basis and share their ideas, best practices and questions.
* **An association.** Form a group that doesn’t exist. If you are interested in sailing with other parents of adopted kids, start a new organization.

**Three Ways to Win at Community**

So what does it take to create a strong, effective tribe? Here are three keys, [according to Godin](http://www.sethgodin.com/sg/default.asp), who is quoted.

**“The secret of leadership is simple: Do what you believe in.”** You must have passion, believe in the area and activity, and convey that through your words and action.

**“An individual artist needs only 1,000 true fans in her tribe. It’s enough.”** Business development success is about the quality of the contacts, not the quantity.

**“Leaders lead when they take positions, when they connect with their tribes, and when they help the tribe connect to itself.”** Your goal? Be the hub of the wheel. Connect people and help them build relationships. When things start coming through you, you will know it’s working.

So organize, manage and lead a tribe and, just as important, find ways for the members of the tribe to engage with each other. Just one caveat: Communities take time to build, so you must sustain your effort.

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