

Prospecting for Clients

Attorneys will waste time and money if they try to market to everyone who needs legal help. They have to learn to select the proper targets for their marketing efforts. The following outline can assist in training attorneys to qualify their prospects.

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Many lawyers tend to think that everyone is a potential client. For example, the marketing committees of corporate law firms frequently will take the list of top companies from their local or regional business journal and proclaim it as their list of targets. Similarly, estate-planning lawyers see every wealthy person in their community as a prospect for their services.

Yet the truth is that there are many reasons an individual or company will never use the services of a particular firm. One critical skill attorneys need to hone regarding business development is "prospecting," i.e., determining whether someone is a viable prospect for the firm's services.

If lawyers qualify their prospects, they will not waste their valuable time, resources and energy on efforts that are bound to fail (and damage their egos). Through effective prospecting, lawyers will avoid appearing too blatant or aggressive in their approaches, because they will be addressing only those people who are potentially in need of, or interested in, their services.

The following outline can be applied when training attorneys to qualify their prospects.

I. UNDERSTANDING YOUR PROSPECT

Before soliciting business, you should research several factors about potential clients, including:

- their current situation;
- their awareness and knowledge of you and your firm; and
- their risks in employing your firm.

Proper research and analysis of these issues will lead to an informed decision as to whether to pursue a prospect. If you do decide to go ahead and court the business, you will have sound research upon which to base your approach.