

Play to Win

[Marketing Where You Are: Build on a Passion](#)

By [Sally J. Schmidt](#) | Feb.16.15 | [Business Development](#), [Daily Dispatch](#), [Law Firm Management](#), [Legal Marketing](#)



At a recent Marketing Partner Forum, organizers presented the results of a Thompson Reuters survey of law firm marketers. Two points in particular jumped out at me: (1) The “most-important initiative” for the law firms was improving business development; and (2) the top challenge to business development was lawyer engagement.

The longer I work with lawyers, the more I am convinced that the problem firm management has engaging lawyers lies with the marketing/business development side of the house, not the other way around. Sure, there are some skeptical or even downright recalcitrant attorneys when it comes to marketing. But for most, I believe the lack of engagement comes because they haven’t found a way to be comfortable in their business development skin.

Find the Passion in Your Practice

Every lawyer is different. We can’t just expect people to emulate successful rainmakers. We need to look for things that will get them interested in business development.

The passion doesn’t necessarily come from substantive issues in the law. It could be the way services are delivered or a nexus with a particular industry. For example, I recently met with a very bright IP lawyer who never felt comfortable with marketing. After learning he grew up on a farm, I asked if he had considered exploring patent law issues in the agribusiness industry. Suddenly, he was anxious to explore the possibility.

Also, a litigator with whom I work recently finished a one-off case for a client in the entertainment field. We did some research and found an emerging entertainment industry in his city. As someone who acted throughout high school and college, he is thrilled at the idea of connecting with this new industry.

Once you find a passion for your practice, be sure to communicate it in your elevator speech, bio and LinkedIn page. These are real examples I recently heard from lawyers that aptly illustrate the point:

- “I knew I would work in the health-care industry. My whole family works in health care — doctors, nurses, sales.”
- “I always knew I wanted to be a lawyer — and be in the courtroom especially.”

Look Outside the Practice

But what if you practice in a given area of law for reasons other than passion? Then identify a passion from the rest of your life and look for ways to incorporate it into your marketing or business development efforts. Do you love to write? Start a blog. Do you enjoy research? Develop an annual trends white paper in your practice area. Do you like to run? Create a running club of professionals. Are you a devoted parent? Organize a networking group of professional moms or dads.

Don't forget to incorporate your outside interests into your firm bio or LinkedIn page, too. Sharing personal interests can provide a great way to find a connection with someone or, at a minimum, be a good conversation starter. Think about it: Would you rather talk to a lawyer about insurance issues or the rock 'n' roll band in which he plays?

Whether you are a lawyer or a marketing professional working with lawyers, dig deep to find the passion. Once you do, you will find marketing and business development efforts become more enjoyable, more efficient and more effective.

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