

Teaching New Lawyers to Market

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There is no question that the top priority of any new lawyer is to learn to be a good lawyer, to focus on quality and substantive development. Still, those firms that want to turn their associates into partners should recognize that failing to educate associates about marketing does a great disservice to associates and the firm.

New business does not come quickly. It results from years of sustained effort and relationship building. The seeds that are planted in the first five, seven or ten years of a lawyer's practice will determine in large part future business development success. The firm, its partners and its associates must take equal responsibility for cultivating those seeds.

Teaching Marketing: Five Tactics for Firms and Partners

Many associates want to participate in marketing, but they just don't know what to do or how to do it. While the firm and its partners can show new lawyers the way through a number of techniques, there are five particularly important ones.

1. Explain the importance of marketing. Associates should know how marketing will affect their future with the



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firm. Tell them whether client development efforts or results are considerations in bonuses, criteria for partnership, factors in partner compensation and other relevant issues.

2. Clarify expectations. Once associates know the importance of marketing and business development, they'll want to know what the firm expects them to do. Explain the kinds of behaviors or level of commitment the firm encourages in new lawyers, from activities with existing clients to networking in the community. How many hours should it take? How should the time be recorded? What approvals do they need? Let associates know specifics.

3. Encourage involvement in marketing initiatives. First-hand activities are the best way to learn business development skills. So have partners take associates to client meetings, involve them in seminar preparation and ask them to help write proposals for new business.

In the old days, associates were told not to worry about developing business, just to concentrate on making partners' lives easier. But times have changed. We need to nurture new lawyers' business development skills.