

Play to Win

To Build a Stronger Personal Connection With Clients, Highlight Common Interests

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Clients increasingly say they want to know more about their lawyers. Having an outside interest in common can lead to a personal connection that puts you at the top of their shortlist.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, many lawyers are struggling to find opportunities to connect with people; telephone calls and Zoom meetings only go so far. But, whether by accident or design, other lawyers have found ways to not only engage people but also build stronger connections through their personal interests.

There was a time when professionals didn't reveal their "out-of-the-office" sides. Over the past decade, however, there have been many more efforts to humanize lawyers. Bios reference family members or pets. LinkedIn profiles highlight favorite teams or outside activities. Videos and pictures show lawyers cooking or riding horses.

In my opinion, this is a good development and likely accelerated by social media. Clients increasingly say they would like to know more about their lawyers than where they went to school or how many years of experience they have. And more and more clients are seeking a personal connection with their advisors, one that likely falls outside substantive issues.

How Interests Can Become Opportunities

In my experience coaching lawyers, there is always something on a personal level that's both important to them and interesting to others. For example, one lawyer recounted getting work from a prospect after she noted on his LinkedIn profile that he plays in a community band. He had already been under consideration but she plays in a band, too, and appreciated the commonality.

Your interests can be woven into your story on a bio or LinkedIn profile. For example:

- A lawyer who played NCAA Division I basketball.
- A lawyer who is active in a group for parents of twins.
- A lawyer who rescues greyhounds.

Your interests also may have the potential to become virtual activities that can engage targets. For example:

- A lawyer who knits and participates in an [online craft group](#).
- A lawyer who participates in a weekly online poker game.
- A lawyer who is active in online discussion groups for car collectors.

When Pursuing the Personal Connection

A few words of encouragement — or caution:

- **Steer away from controversial activities.** You are who you are but the goal is to attract people, not turn them off.
- **Be authentic.** Whatever you decide to pursue must be a true passion and not concocted for marketing purposes.
- **Look for ways to further highlight your interest.** For example, use a piece of art you painted as your LinkedIn background. Use your child's drawing of you as your avatar on social media. Do you play any instruments? Stage them behind you so they are visible on Zoom calls.

Obviously, a common interest will not be the only thing that causes a prospect to send you work. You must have the credentials, too. But once you're on the shortlist, a common interest can be the thing that pushes you to the top. So be creative, find an authentic way to express yourself, and look for others who share a similar passion.

Sally Schmidt, President of Schmidt Marketing, Inc., helps lawyers and law firms grow their practices. She was a founder and the first President of the Legal Marketing Association, is a Fellow of the College of Law Practice Management and was one of the first inductees to LMA's Hall of Fame. Known for her practical advice, she is the author of two books, "[Marketing the Law Firm: Business Development Techniques](#)" and "[Business Development for Lawyers: Strategies for Getting and Keeping Clients](#)." Follow her @SallySchmidt.