

[**Starting the Year Right: Business Development Goals for Every Lawyer**](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/starting-year-right-business-development-goals-for-every-lawyer/)By Sally J. Schmidt | Dec.16.13

We all begin each new year with good intentions, but you know what they say about the road to hell. As 2014 approaches, most lawyers will have some marketing and business development goals and objectives in mind. However, such goals often tend to be aspirational and lacking in specificity — things like “make partner,” “generate more referrals” or “increase my visibility.”

So, to give you a leg up in the New Year, I have outlined what would be excellent goals for any lawyer, along with some specific ideas to help you make progress against them. Aspirations are fine, but everybody knows the devil is in the details.

**Worthy Goals and Potential Strategies**

**1. Have more personal interaction.** Law is a relationship business. If you take time to build relationships with key contacts, you will notice the difference in your level of satisfaction and in your practice. How to do it?

* Buy several boxes of notecards and send at least one personal note a week.
* Set up three client visits or tours next year.
* Meet with one client contact you’ve never met before.
* Schedule a certain number of coffees and lunches each month.
* Whenever possible, pick up the phone instead of sending an email.

 **2. Provide better client service.** Everyone knows that existing clients are the best sources of new business. So it only makes sense to spend more time and energy nurturing those important relationships. Some ideas:

* Acknowledge every email ASAP, even if just to say you will answer more fully later.
* Return all phone calls within a half-day. (Or, if you are tied up, have your assistant do it for you.)
* Change your outgoing voicemail daily to reflect your availability.
* Set up intake meetings with the lawyers and staff — and possibly the client — to discuss and coordinate new matters.
* Establish a formal client team for a major client.

 **3. Engage in credentialing activities.** Clients want to hire an “expert,” but how do they know how much you know? They don’t. That’s why they look at your articles, blog postings, honors, activities and presentations. A few tips:

* Identify a publication in which you’d like to be published and pitch an article topic.
* Contact an industry or trade association with an idea for a presentation.
* Write an alert for a newsletter or blog.
* Volunteer or run for a leadership position in a key organization.
* Offer to give a presentation at a seminar or symposium.

**4. Improve your platform.** Organizing for marketing can make your efforts both easier and more productive. Where to start?

* Write and practice your elevator speech. Learn how to describe what you do more effectively.
* Develop an experience database. Capture the cases, deals or matters on which you’ve worked and vow to keep it current. This will be invaluable in five to 10 years.
* Improve your bio. Update your experience, add your articles, presentations and other activities, and be sure the narrative accurately reflects what you do.
* Update your LinkedIn profile. Ditto the above but make it more personal.
* Establish a way to manage your contacts. Use the firm’s CRM, a spreadsheet or a pad of paper to track whom you know and when you last contacted them.

If you are short on ideas or hoping to jump-start your marketing and business development next year, I suggest you pick one or more of these goals along with a few discrete activities to implement in 2014. Be realistic, be purposeful, and remember: You never know where your actions may take you. Getting started is half the battle.

***Sally J. Schmidt*** *is President of Schmidt Marketing, Inc., which offers marketing services to law firms. Sally was a founder and the first President of the Legal Marketing Association. She is a Fellow of the College of Law Practice Management and one of the first inductees into the LMA’s Hall of Fame. She is the author of*[*Marketing the Law Firm: Business Development Techniques*](http://www.lawcatalog.com/product_detail.cfm?productID=15013&masterid=15012)*and*[*Business Development for Lawyers: Strategies for Getting and Keeping Clients*](http://www.lawcatalog.com/product_detail.cfm?affil=707082&productID=6570)*. Sally writes Attorney at Work’s “Play to Win” column. Follow her on Twitter*[*@SallySchmidt*](https://twitter.com/sallyschmidt)*.*