

Play to Win

[**More Business Development Tips for Associates**](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/business-development-tips-associates/)

By [Sally J. Schmidt](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/author/sally-j-schmidt/) | Jul.21.14 | [Business Development](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/category/business-development/), [Daily Dispatch](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/category/articles/), [Legal Marketing](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/category/legal-marketing-2/), [Marketing 101](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/category/marketing-101/), [New Lawyers](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/category/new-lawyers/)



More and more young lawyers are actively seeking ways to get involved in marketing and business development. In some cases, their firms encourage it; in others, the associates recognize the importance on their own. Either way, by starting early, they gain several advantages: getting a leg up professionally on contemporaries, creating good lifetime marketing behaviors, and learning marketing skills when the expectations and pressures are less intense.

Last month, I wrote about [three things young lawyers can do to get started](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/business-development-starters-associates/) in marketing and business development. Here are three more things you can do, too. If you implement all six activities, your future marketing efforts will be much more productive.

**Three More Places to Start**

**1. Become active in an organization.** Every lawyer needs to be involved in an outside organization and, ultimately, its leadership. Done right, this will:

* Help you meet people and build your network of contacts.
* Allow you to give something back to the profession or the community — which people expect of lawyers.
* Help you build your leadership skills and a reputation as the kind of person who can get things done.

For pure business development, some organizations may be better than others. For young lawyers, however, I am less concerned about what the group is than the lawyer’s commitment to it. For example, a seventh-year lawyer with whom I work is a member of a service organization and landed an eminent domain issue when the group’s building was targeted by the city.

If you are seeking an organization in which to get involved, your choices are many:

* School-related groups, such as your college or law school alumni association
* Bar association entities, such as the Young Lawyers Division of the ABA or your state bar
* Industry groups, like a local forum for start-up technology companies
* Community or civic groups, such as a library or homeless shelter volunteer group
* Diversity or affinity groups, like the Asian American Bar Association
* Organized activities, like an annual marathon or charity golf tournament
* Social or networking groups, like a breakfast club of young professionals

For your outside activity to be helpful for future business development, you must make a real commitment to it — dive in, attend meetings and get involved. For your contributions to be genuine, you must feel some passion for the organization, its subject or its cause.

**2. Show what you know.** Substantive expertise is still a work in progress for most young lawyers. Still, I believe associates should aim to complete one “thought-leadership” activity each year, which could include:

* An article for a newsletter, blog or website, whether published by the firm or an outside source
* A speech, which could be given at an internal firm meeting (e.g., for a practice group), a firm-sponsored event for clients (like a webinar or seminar) or something sponsored by an outside group (such as the aforementioned organizations)

Opportunities are easier to obtain than you might think. For subject matter, you only need to know more than the reader or audience member. For example, you could track the whistleblower cases in your courts and report on trends over the past five years. Or you could identify [a niche within a niche](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/stand-out-from-the-crowd/) (e.g., M&A issues involving government contractors) in which you have had some experience.

And, don’t forget, you can always team with a firm partner, a client, a referral source or another “authority” if you need more substantive expertise or gravitas. In fact, my very first published article was co-authored with a faculty advisor from my MBA program.

**3. Build your platform.** Finally, you need to get comfortable with how you present yourself to people — your personal brand. This takes many forms, including:

* Your “elevator speech” — how you describe what you do (and what the firm does)
* [Your firm website bio](http://www.attorneyatwork.com/online-profiles-presenting-best-version/)
* Your LinkedIn profile

Spend time thinking about how to describe your practice. Create different versions for different audiences (e.g., an HOA meeting of neighbors versus a law school reunion). In all cases, focus on the kinds of clients you represent, what you do to help them and ways in which you (or the firm) are different.

Be conscious of your personal brand when you talk with people, whether it’s a partner from whom you’d like to obtain more work or someone unrelated to the firm. And keep your brand message up to date. For example, review your firm bio and LinkedIn profile at least twice a year, adding new areas of expertise or interesting new representative cases on which you’ve worked. Your practice will change and your experiences will grow, so you need to make sure you are always presenting the best version of yourself.

**Six Business Development Building Blocks for the Long Term**

Will any of these six steps (here and in my previous post) bring in business? Probably not, at least not in the short term. But each is an essential building block to your future marketing and business development success.

***Sally J. Schmidt*** *is President of*[*Schmidt Marketing, Inc.*](http://www.schmidt-marketing.com/)*, 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 was 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)*.*