How Lawyers Can Conduct Successful Pitch Meetings

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KEY TAKEAWAY: Due to busy schedules, lawyers often neglect to prepare adequately for pitch meetings. This leaves them unprepared to address the real concerns of the client and reduces their chances of winning. Furthermore, once at the meeting, some lawyers can spend too much time talking about themselves; thus, limiting their opportunity to uncover the client's real needs. Read on to learn about the six steps of a

Diagnose Before You Prescribe

Most lawyers are very proud of what they do – as individuals, as groups, and as law firms. They attended good law schools, got excellent grades, mastered the practice of law and consistently achieve good results for their clients. Understandably, some lawyers are looking for opportunities to tell potential clients all about it.

However, when this practice extends to pitch meetings, it can be deadly. The tendency to start a business development meeting talking about yourself, your group, and your firm is a natural one – but one that should be avoided. Only after you have taken the time to determine the client's needs should you talk about your solutions and capabilities. In short, "diagnose before you prescribe." The focus must be on the potential client, the problem that is keeping the client up at night, and how you can help the client to solve that problem.

The Typical Approach

Unfortunately, due to the very real constraints on a lawyer's time and the difficulty of scheduling multiple lawyers for one meeting, pitch preparation is often put off to the last minute; forcing those most invested in the outcome to scramble.

Without proper planning, unsuccessful pitch meetings tend to go as follows. Two hours before the appointment, the lawyers ask marketing to pull together "the usual materials about the firm." On the way to the meeting, they chat with a colleague about who will deliver which parts of the dissertation regarding the firm and its services. At the meeting, they may spend the majority of the time "presenting" the qualifications of the firm and talking about how successful it is. Two weeks later, they wonder why the firm didn't get the work.

The Optimal Approach

By comparison, the optimal approach requires preparation and a fundamental change in perspective. Clients should be encouraged to talk more than 75 percent of the time in response to careful questions posed by the lawyer. The lawyers will be listening, mirroring body language, taking notes and asking follow-up questions. The goal is to find the client's true needs — needs that your services can solve.

In other words, a business development meeting is not about you. It is all about the potential client.

The Six Steps of a Successful Pitch

Step 1: Research the potential client. The first step in preparing for a business development meeting with a potential client is to start early and do your research. Much information about any company is available on the Internet – via the client's web site, content searches, case-filing searches, and your own lawyers.

Step 2: Probe the potential client. Additional information should be acquired by calling the potential client prior to the meeting and asking about the company's goals, culture, emerging challenges, and legal needs. This always makes a favorable impression. Also, find out who will be participating in the meeting. Then, go back to the Internet to find out as much information as you can about these individuals.

Step 3: Prepare relevant materials. Any prepared materials should demonstrate – without getting bogged down in war stories – how your firm has successfully solved problems for clients like them in industries like theirs. Generic firm, group, and biographic materials can be included – but only as supplemental materials.

Step 4: Mirror the potential client. The law-firm's team should mirror – without looking artificial – the team of the potential client, including the number of individuals, demographics, communication style, and dress. Business development at this stage is all about relationships, and people find it easier to be persuaded by people who are similar to themselves. That said, team members should not be selected to be mere window-dressing; they should be the actual individuals who will be doing the work.

Step 5: Focus conversation on the potential client. At the meeting, well-prepared participants should ask specific questions about the potential client, its market, its administrative structure, its operations, and its business and legal challenges. The answers should be used to generate follow-up questions.

When you understand their problems, switch gears and talk about your solution and "leave it all on the table." Act as if the potential client has already hired you and provide advice of value that demonstrates exactly how you and your colleagues function as trusted advisers.

Remember – if they could have done this on their own, they would have. Anything you can give them in a two-hour pitch meeting will not eliminate their need for outside counsel. At the same time, they will notice and appreciate your willingness to be of assistance.

Step 6: Follow up with the potential client. When the business development meeting is over, try to leave with a specific next step – something like, "Can I call you in a week to see if you have any additional questions?" Do not wait around passively for the potential client to contact you. When you return to the office, send a thank-you letter, along with information about any additional subjects that might have come up in the meeting. Follow up with a schedule of regular contact to continue to build the relationship.

Step 7: De-brief the potential client. You will either get the work or you won't. In either case, have someone de-brief the client. If you get the work, find out what it was about your presentation that turned the tables in your favor. If you don't get the work, find out what you could have done differently to bring about a different outcome.

Often, it is easier to have someone who was not on the business development team do the de-briefing interview. Use this information to continuously improve your presentation skills. Even if you are not hired to solve a particular problem, continue to find ways to add value to the potential client. There will be additional opportunities down the road.

Successful law-firm business developers know how to turn the spotlight away from themselves and shine it on the potential client and the potential client's problems.

Overview of Revenue Wise Services and Contact Information

FIRM OVERVIEW

Revenue Wise is a full service firm that specializes in helping law firms grow revenue. We use a combination of coaching, training, and consulting to help lawyers, practice groups, and ultimately, law firms become more successful. We can also license our materials, so your in-house staff can deliver the programs.

Past clients have averaged an 800% return on their investment in our programs.

We have been serving law firms for over 20 years and count some of the nation's top firms as our clients, including Orrick, Littler Mendelson, Fenwick & West, Keker & Van Nest, Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, Holland & Hart, Lindquist & Vennun and many other firms.

Our services are grouped under these areas:

- **Lawyers Services.** We help your lawyers become better business developers.
- **LinkedIn and Social Media Services.** Many consider our LinkedIn for Lawyers program the best available.
- **Practice & Industry Group Services.** We help your team leaders and members increase revenue, deepen client loyalty, and improve overall team performance.
- **Client Development Services.** We help your firm systematically develop and deepen client loyalty.
- **Firm Services.** We help law firms develop strategies, structures, and plans that measurably grow revenue.
- **Marketing Department Services.** We work with marketing leaders and their teams to optimize the performance of their departments.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about our services, please write or give us a call.

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