

Avoid Career Suicide This Year: Soar With Your Network of Relationships

By Thom Singer



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You want to develop more business, but often when you get busy and the pressure of the volatile economy weighs you down you can easily get distracted from the importance of your networking efforts. Now is the best time to re-dedicate yourself, re-focus your efforts, toward your long term business development goals.



The legal industry now realizes that it is not immune from the business disciplines that their client companies must attend to: sales, marketing, public relations, and networking. The world of legal services is continuing to get more competitive and smart lawyers know that they must be even more dedicated to cultivating strong business relationships in the face of the current economic

climate.

We all know that people do business with those they know, like and trust. Yet, despite clear evidence of rising expectations from both clients and firm management, too many attorneys fail to nurture their networks at an acceptably high enough level of importance. This can be career suicide in the year to come.

As we launch into 2009 there is a lot of fear, uncertainty and doubt about how to best keep and grow business. Many lawyers are convincing themselves that, in revenue terms, “flat is the new up,” and so feel comfortable just working on sustaining business. WRONG. Up is always up, and flat is not going to impress anyone. Ignoring the need to network and being complacent has no place in a tough economy. Business development must be in the front seat of practice management.

Everyone in your firms needs to focus on the power of business relationships in order to come out on top this year – or you’ll lose to those who do. Any lawyer who scoffs at this is now out of touch, for your competitors are most likely working actively on their own

business relationships, which include your clients. To avoid career and firm suicide, each person must be an evangelist for the organization to ensure success this year.

Here are three tips to make sure your networking efforts pay off in 2009:

1. **Never stop telling your story.** You never know when your value will resonate with a potential client or referral source...and make a difference. If you do not let others know the hows and whys that differentiate you and your firm, then who will? Provide people with the information they need to select you or refer you to others. Be sure that the people in your network understand what type of law you practice and see you as the “Go To” lawyer in your area of expertise.
2. **Lead your firm in creating a culture that embraces networking and developing new business.** Most attorneys want to be rainmakers, but many are not confident in their ability to generate new contacts that will lead to more work. Assist others in understanding the power of business relationships and lead by the example of how you treat all the people you encounter in your business community.
3. **Be known as more than a lawyer; become a business connector.** By your actions, position yourself as a resource for clients and prospects that goes beyond the services for which you bill them. Introduce your clients to other VIPs in your organization’s collective network. People are always looking to connect with other professionals and you can be the one that makes valuable introductions for the most important people in your database. Attorneys that cultivate strong networking across their community are the ones that will best weather the economic storms.

Focus on doing more than just keeping your career alive in the new year. Instead work to expand your business network and grow your business.

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