

Like Hockey, Business Development Is About Taking Lots of Shots

I have a confession to make: I don't like professional sports.



I'm rethinking how I feel, though, thanks to the Carolina Hurricanes.

Jaffe Staff

I recently attended my first NHL game – the Carolina Hurricanes versus the Buffalo Sabres. Hubby was smart about getting me to the game. We had fantastic seats three rows back from the ice.

The speed, the action, the fights. I think I could learn to really like this game, but I need to understand what is going on out there on the ice, so I've been educating myself on the rules and strategies, and what all of those statistics mean.

What I learned was that players take a lot of shots in hockey, but the number of goals scored is very low. It takes training, perseverance, seizing opportunities and being okay with missing more than you score. Thinking about it, I realized just how many aspects of the game ring true to of life, even in legal marketing.

Here are a few ways to look at developing business through the lens of hockey.

Be Strategic

Like scoring a goal in hockey, lawyers looking to develop new business have to be strategic and work for results. Have a simple but strategic plan, and work it regularly. For example, make a list of five prospective clients with whom you would like to work, then go to the conferences they attend, introduce yourself and start building relationships.

Hone Your Skills

Hockey players have to be focused and specific about exactly what they need to improve in their game. While law schools do not teach business development per se, they do equip lawyers with skills that translate well to the business development process. This includes being a good listener, asking the right questions and using creative thinking. The more you practice these skills to develop relationships with prospective clients, the easier it will be become, and the more success you will have.

Take a Lot of Shots

Everyone loves goals – the slick moves, the well-placed shots and the player celebrations. I've learned that the average number of goals per NHL game is 2.7 per team, while the average number of shots taken is 34.3. New business development is not a one-shot

scenario. Statistics show that it takes an average of eight interactions with a prospective client before you are positioned to earn their business.

Work with Your Team

You don't have to work to develop business alone. In fact, you are likely to find more success if you team up with others. Does someone else in the firm know the client you are targeting? If so, talk with them about what they know about the target, and find out whether they will make an introduction. Do others in the firm attend the prospect's trade association meetings? Ask if you can attend with them. This makes breaking the ice much easier.

As hockey legend Wayne Gretsky once said, "You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take." The same can be said about business development for lawyers. Business development is about networking and developing relationships. If you sit at your desk with a sandwich for lunch every day, you are not taking the shots.

Need help with your business development efforts? Contact Terry M. Isner at tisner@jaffepr.com.