

Business Development Is about Taking a Lot of Shots

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.



Jaffe Staff

Thinking about it, there are a lot of parallels between hockey and professional services business development. It takes endurance, and patience, to be successful. You can develop dozens of leads, but only a minority might become clients.

Even though the NHL season is currently on hiatus, it doesn't mean we can't have hockey on the mind. To that end, here are a few tips to help your business development efforts, as explained through the lens of hockey.

Be Strategic

Like scoring a goal in hockey, professional services providers 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. You might not have formal training in business development, but that's okay. You likely have a number of transferable skills you've already perfected. 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. 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 professional services providers. 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 me, [Terry M. Isner](mailto:Terry.M.Isner), at tisner@jaffepr.com.