

Don't Neglect Business Development in the New Year

With the start of 2021, it would be normal to hit “refresh” on business development efforts. You can wipe the slate clean, and **hit reset** – new year, new you, new plan. However, with so many unknowns right now, it hardly feels relevant to start afresh. Business development and **networking opportunities** have yet to return to normalcy, and traditional best practices are hardly relevant. Can you just wait to focus your efforts until we're in a post-pandemic world? The short answer to that is you could, but you shouldn't.

In our current business environment, it's easy to shift your focus to your client work and push business development initiatives to the side or allow them to become an afterthought. You can try to rationalize that since you can't meet in person, these efforts are a waste of time. Ultimately, excuses are easy, and action is harder.

However, this is a great time to prepare ourselves for success related to **business development and the sales process** in the future. The words “business development” and “sales” are often scary to even the most-seasoned professional services providers. For example, very few lawyers entered law school considering that they might have to market themselves and develop a book of business through a sales process. Many assumed success would be shown through victories in the courtroom or large settlements for clients. As we wait for the return of conferences and other in-person networking events, now is the time to work on overcoming your fears of these essential business-building skills.

Make Meaningful Connections

Sales often has a negative connotation associated with it, especially to those in professional services who think that their experience and knowledge should be the number-one factor when choosing an advisor. But “sales” doesn't have to be a bad word. The sales process is simply converting any business development effort into business, and business development in the professional services world is often conducted through personal connections and referrals.

I also want to distinguish the difference between simply meeting someone and having a meaningful connection. Business development is not meeting people once or twice and expecting them to not only remember you but hire you. We meet a lot of people in our day-to-day interactions – whether virtual or in person – through a myriad of outlets, including professional development groups, social situations or professional affiliations. Making yourself memorable and positioning yourself as a thought leader to those you interact with are the keys to success.

It's also important to remember that there are ways to make impressions other than



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direct encounters. While a prospect might not have an immediate need for you or your firm's services, sending them a helpful referral or introducing them to a useful business contact will leave a memorable impression. Consider other opportunities for visibility, such as writing articles; pursuing [rankings](#); or sharing your thought leadership by creating video content, submitting to a blog or speaking on a podcast.

Your Goals Are Your Own

Whether the new year has you revamping a rainmaking business development plan, dusting off your discarded one or starting from scratch, it's important to make sure you have the skills necessary for your success. Remember that not everyone's path to business development victory looks the same, and not every professional is trying to accomplish the same thing. On the same note, no one person's business development goals should be measured the same as anyone else's. However, understanding why business development is not only necessary but important and achievable is the first step to accomplishing your goals.

Are you looking for guidance or help with your business development or marketing initiatives? Reach out to [Evyann O'Keefe](#) at eokeefe@jaffepr.com for assistance.