

Skills and strategies for business development in the legal sector

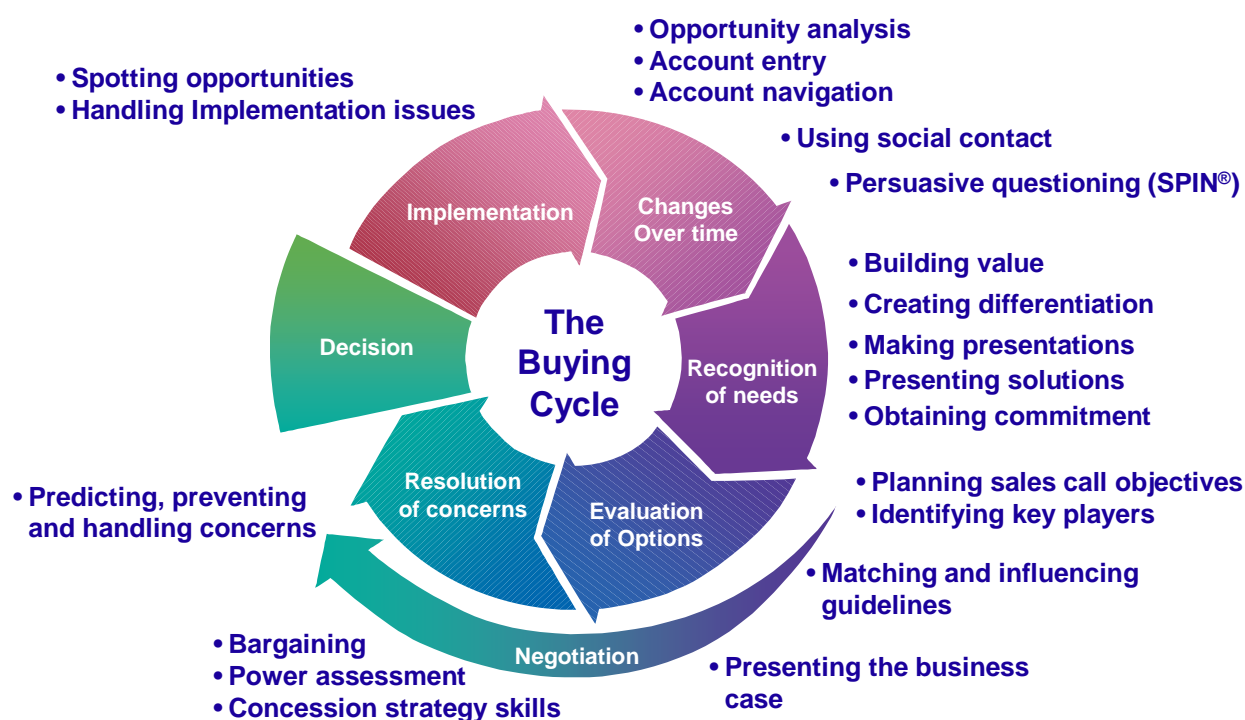


Skills and strategies for business development in the legal sector

The list of skills and strategies mapped round the buying cycle shown below are the building blocks that provide the foundations for each unique client solution. Having established with you the business outcomes you are seeking, we select the appropriate building blocks - derived from our years of research and best practice observation and overlay them with new, customised materials created specifically to reflect your situation. The resulting programme(s) provide a blend of tried and tested models and new, unique, designs that create the most effective route to your desired business outcomes.

The client/lawyer interaction is the core of effective business development (BD), but not the whole of it. We also work with you to consider BD in its widest context: internal management, pitching, networking, negotiation skills and relationship management.

- Client relationships
- Client services
- Mentoring
- Meetings skills
- Dealing with procurement



Client relationships

A lawyer's technical skills are taken as a given. There are plenty of competent lawyers, but what distinguishes the good from the very good is having the ability to manage client relationships effectively. Every client has different needs and approaches to business. A lawyer's understanding of how to manage these, often complex, relationships is paramount to success.

Client service

Critical to ongoing retention of clients is the level of service they receive. The levels of satisfaction and loyalty depend very much on how they are treated over time. We understand the need for a seamless experience from sales through to service and our programme ensures that all client touch points use familiar language and behaviours to help your firm grow.

Mentoring

The career path for a lawyer may appear clearly mapped out and as a partnership opportunity nears, the ability to develop own clients and fee income is a key performance indicator. Mentoring is a task focused and confidential method of learning. Through our mentoring programmes, either one to one or as part of a group, a lawyer can improve upon specific skills to enhance their business development efforts.

Meeting skills

Meetings and video-conferences, whether internal or external, are an important part of every fee earner's working life. The way clients and colleagues see an individual communicate and interact with others, deal with their questions, articulate a discussion, present themselves or lead a meeting, shapes their perception of that individual and their reaction to them.

Dealing with procurement

The procurement landscape is changing. There was a time when the focus of procurement was on manufactured goods and raw materials. Now their focus has extended and procurement is involved in the purchase of legal and professional services. As procurement becomes a core strategic function in many organisations, the threat of commoditisation is now a harsh reality. A reality that won't go away and one that needs to be managed as part of the tendering process.

Spotting opportunities & opportunity analysis

Most business developers can spot an opportunity. Smart business developers do two things differently; spot opportunities earlier, and hence have more influence over the client's needs, and spot 'good' opportunities (the ones most likely to result in a business) rather than waste time chasing opportunities that come to nothing. These skills reveal the science behind this ability.

Handling implementation issues

Many clients' pet-hate is the business developer who disappears the minute the contract is signed (only to reappear when the next opportunity presents itself). Implementing a complex solution is never straightforward and clients, like anyone, need and deserve some reassurance. So why is the person with whom they have developed a good relationship, the business developer, suddenly nowhere to be seen? This module looks at the skills effective business developers use to

minimise the negative elements during implementation and use it as a springboard for securing the account and identifying future opportunities.

Account entry and navigation

Two questions we are often asked by business developers are; How do we get into new accounts and, once in, how do we move away from our original contact without upsetting them? These skills look at how effective business developers plan their moves, in terms of direction, timing and content, in order to gain momentum and maximise impact across the decision-making unit.

Using social contact

One of the biggest variables across market sectors is the degree to which social contact plays a part in business development. In some sectors socialising with clients is unheard of, in others it's purely social and has no commercial purpose beyond cementing relationships, but to a third group it's a fundamental element of the sales process. Surprisingly, even in this third group, many people have difficulty balancing social contact and often find themselves torn between pure socialising and thinly disguised sales pitches. This skill set looks at getting the balance between social contact and purposeful contact right – from deciding the type of event you arrange, through who you invite, to the skills you use when working the event.

Persuasive questioning (SPIN®)

It should come as no surprise that effective questioning lies at the heart of effective business development. It is now universally accepted that, except in the simplest, most transactional sales, questions are vital. So why do so many business developers ask loads of questions but still struggle to win sales? Because life is never that simple. It's not simply a matter of asking questions; it's about asking the right questions at the right time. This module looks in depth at the most fundamental and important skill set a business developer needs to succeed.

Building value

In the 70's business was won by creating technical differentiation, in the 90's quality was king. Now, with product differentiation short-lived and quality taken as a given, it is the creation of value, both in your solution and your relationship with the client, that is the key to success. This skill set looks at what constitutes value and how to create and deliver it to the client during the sales process.

Creating differentiation

Identifying the client's needs, and building value are fundamentally important, but what if your competitors can do that too? Regrettably you rarely have the client to yourself and others will be trying to win the business against you. This skill set considers how the most effective business developers use effective questions to build a unique, and hence differentiated, offering to the client's needs.

Making presentations

A formal sales pitch is unique in two ways; it's your best, and possibly only, opportunity to meet all the decision-makers face-to-face and it's your best opportunity to bore them all to death with endless slides and graphics! 'Death by PowerPoint' is all too familiar, so how do you avoid it? This module looks at how to ensure the structure and content of your presentations are memorable, easy to understand and, most importantly, persuasive.

Presenting solutions

All too often we see business developers doing a great job of uncovering the client's needs only to create massive problems for themselves when they come to talk about their solution. Research shows the behaviours most likely to win the client's approval are the behaviours least used by most business developers. This skill-set shows how to avoid this trap and ensure your solution has maximum impact on the client.

Obtaining commitment

There has probably been more written about 'closing' than any other business development skill. Unfortunately many of the 'techniques' advocated only work in small, transactional sales and are in fact counter-productive in high-value sales situations. This skill set looks at the key steps to effectively concluding a business development meeting in high-value, B2B sales scenarios.

Planning call objectives

For many business developers planning call objectives is more to do with getting a tick in the right box on a call record rather than what's the most appropriate outcome to aim for in a particular call. These skills consider how to measure the real outcome of a call – particularly those mid-cycle calls where the order is still some way away, and plan stretching but robust objectives accordingly.

Identifying key players

Most business developers know who their key contacts are. However, most don't know who all the key players are and, more significantly, they don't know what role in the decision each key player has. These skills look beyond obvious, and often misleading, clues such as job title and explore the real roles within a decision-making unit.

Matching and influencing decision guidelines

At some stage in every sale your client will, either consciously or sub-consciously, compare what you can offer against what he or she wants. Invariably that will happen when you are not with them – so how do you make sure your solution matches the client's decision guidelines most closely? This skill set looks at how you can influence these guidelines in your favour and align your solution most closely to them.

Presenting the business case

For many business developers writing a proposal is seen as a chore, an inevitable but irritating hurdle to the business development process demanded by the client. However, in reality the proposal often represents your one and only chance to influence directly those members of the decision-making team you have not met face-to-face. So why are so many proposals little more than product information with prices and little or no persuasive content? This module looks at how to ensure your proposals positively persuade all the decision-makers.

Bargaining, power assessment and concession strategy skills

Despite all your best efforts to build value and create differentiation most clients will want to negotiate a better deal than you've offered. Indeed, the primary role of the professional client is to get the best deal from you they can. So how do you ensure you get the order and keep a good relationship with the client without giving away all your hard-earned margin? This suite looks at negotiation, from preparation and planning, through strategies and tactics, to the face-to-face skills used by successful negotiators.

Predicting, preventing and handling concerns

Why do some sales that seem to be going so well, suddenly fizzle out in a string of unreturned calls and ignored emails? By definition, major purchases are big decisions, and big decisions carry risk. Many sales falter because the client has concerns about the risk involved in buying your solution that remain unresolved and push the client towards the 'safest' answer, which is often to do nothing or to stick with the current supplier. This module considers when concerns are likely to arise, how to avoid them and how to deal with those that do appear.



HuthwaiteFleming

publisher HuthwaiteFleming

telephone +44 (0) 1844 274244

email info@huthwaitefleming.com