



MARKETING  
**SPOTLIGHT**

Published: **Daily Journal Extra**

Date: May 16, 2005

# Rainmaking 101

It is a scientific fact that if a latent business development gene is nurtured and focused, it becomes as strong as if it were dominant. **By Sharon Berman**

**W**ith all the scientific brainpower and effort behind the human genome project, isn't it amazing that nothing has been written about a very obvious gene – the one for business development?

We all know attorneys who have it, and we think of them as “natural” business developers or rainmakers. These are the people who came out of the womb already knowing how to enter a room with confidence, build relationships and get the phone to ring with prospective clients. Their talent for networking and building a referral base is as natural as their eye color.

Fortunately, research tells us that almost every attorney has the business development gene – it's usually just latent. It is also a scientific fact that if a latent business development gene is nurtured and focused, it becomes as strong as if it were dominant. In field research, observers state that they cannot tell the difference between those who were born with the dominant business development gene and those who nurtured a latent gene.

What process do scientists recommend for making a latent business development gene as strong as a dominant one? We've scoured the research and summarized our findings below.

■ Give yourself an education. When you received your education in law school, you learned how the legal process works and what you were supposed to do, but you



didn't gain experience until you went to work. Yet when you graduated, you were confident that you had a foundation for your first day on the job.

The same is true when it comes to proficiency in business development. The business development gene thrives on education – learning how the process works and recommended steps to success. But just as you cannot become a proficient lawyer by taking classes or reading books, you cannot gain experience in business development by just reading a book or taking a seminar.

You actually have to go out and do it, but you will feel more comfortable doing so if you've educated yourself and given yourself the tools and training to attend net-

working events, have lunch with a prospective client or cultivate a referral source.

It's easy to educate yourself, since millions of words have been written about building networks and professional relationships, much of it directed specifically at lawyers. Avail yourself of some of this material, as well as the seminars and workshops around town. Knowing what you are supposed to do can give you a lot more confidence, even if you haven't done it.

■ Create a business development plan. Not knowing what you want to accomplish, or where to go to accomplish it, significantly impedes gene development. Fortunately, just a short amount of quality “think” time can help overcome this obstacle.

Start by developing a plan: nothing voluminous, just one or two pages of bullet points that outline the kinds of clients and business you want to attract, specifying their industry, geography, revenues or other information as relevant.

As you research and zero in on your ideal market, don't be afraid of excluding some types of businesses by targeting a specific area, e.g., biotech firms with revenues of more than \$3 million in the greater Los Angeles area. The more you focus your efforts, the farther your marketing investment of both time and money will go.

■ Develop your “elevator speech.” This five to 15-second introduction for networking events, meetings or parties will

consist of only a few words, but they can be among the most challenging you'll ever put together. The trick is to differentiate yourself and be memorable.

You cannot compose your elevator speech while you're getting out of your chair to introduce yourself at a meeting. Crafting these words takes time and attention, as well as practice. Why not rehearse them while you're driving? Having a solid elevator speech at the ready goes a long way to building confidence and nurturing your gene.

■ Acknowledge that you will have to step outside your "comfort zone"—and do it. Nothing is better for the maturation of the business development gene than overcoming your initial discomfort. Research shows that feeling uncomfortable is temporary, just as when you're building muscle. On the other hand, remaining inside that warm and comfortable zone may feel good now, but it will cause your gene to wither and die.

■ Watch those whose business development skills you admire. There is a reason for all the talk about "role models." We all learn a tremendous amount from watching those we admire. But don't try to be someone else; just take the parts that work for you and make them your own.

■ Go for consistency over quantity. Some professionals believe that business

development efforts need to wait until the work pace slows down or they have that three-hour block of time to devote to marketing initiatives. However, waiting can starve the business development gene, while using the "drip" method will foster a slow growth until you can devote more time.

A couple of phone calls each day—even one—to referral sources, clients and prospective clients can build a business development program. However, if you want a fully dominant, potent gene for marketing and relationship development, you must be willing to make a larger investment of time.

■ Having a "service conversation." Those with the weakest genes are usually afraid of being pushy or being perceived as trying to sell someone something. Those with fully developed genes, on the other hand, know that effective business development is about having a "service conversation," which is just the opposite of pushing anything on anyone.

Service conversations are about listening to the other person's needs and trying to be of service. Isn't that what most lawyers truly want to do? It's about using your skills, education and expertise to help another with a problem. To do that, you have to learn to listen and empathize, not develop your gift of gab. The best thing

about service conversations is that they take the pressure off you. Rather than worrying what you can say next to "persuade" them, you simply listen to understand and determine if you can be of service.

■ Making the budget effective. Big bucks don't grow big genes, so don't worry about needing a blockbuster marketing budget. Especially since online marketing has become the great "democratizer," even a small budget can make a big difference in business development provided it is used effectively. What makes it effective? A plan that targets your efforts and makes efficient use of your time and money.

Scientists tell us that even dominant genes may not become fully active without encouragement, but you don't have to wait for gene therapy to be tested and approved by the FDA to create your own gene enhancement program. With the simple steps listed above, you can nurture your business development gene and transform it from the weakling it is today into one that rivals the most robust "natural" rainmaker.

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