

## **Practical Tips for Building Your Network**

It is never too early to start building your network. As a new attorney, you have numerous demands on your time including learning the nuances of your area of law, building client relationships, and creating a rapport with other attorneys and staff at your firm, just to name a few. Many new attorneys are advised early and often of the importance of networking. However, there is no clear roadmap or one size fits all approach to networking. I genuinely hope this article provides some practical approaches to growing your business as you grow as an attorney.

One thing to keep in mind is that your networking efforts should be strategic. Focus your time and attention on those contacts that are most likely to refer you cases. As Plaintiff's attorneys, determining where your time and attention is best spent can be difficult as our clientele come from all walks of life. As trial attorneys, most of us are comfortable speaking in public. Speaking engagements in the community increases your visibility to the public and can be a great way to find new clients. Speaking at conferences or bar association events can also help you develop potential referral sources.

I find it is much easier to maintain an existing relationship than to create a new one. While law school may not adequately prepare law students for the business development aspect of the practice of law, it does provide you with a set of referral sources—your law school classmates. That being said, in order to maintain an existing relationship, it must be nurtured. It is important to reach out to your contacts thoughtfully and consistently. An easy rule of thumb is to reach out at least once a quarter.

We all live in the real world where time is short despite our ever-growing lists of tasks. It can be difficult to fit in multiple lunches a week with potential referral sources when faced with numerous deadlines on our cases. Keep in mind those attorneys you are contacting are also very busy. The goal of networking is to create a meaningful connection so that you are the first attorney that comes to mind when the need arises. This can be accomplished in a number of ways that do not require you to leave your office. Picking up the phone and calling someone is a nice break from the monotony of endless emails. In my opinion a phone call helps you stand out in a world where the default mode of communication is email. Another approach is to use social media and technology to your advantage. If you come across an article you know would interest a contact, pass it along through LinkedIn or email.

It is important to be genuine in your networking efforts, no matter what method you choose. If you like sports and you know a referral source does too, invite them to a sporting event. If sports are not your cup of tea, invite a referral source to a cultural

event you think they will also appreciate. The key is to be yourself in your efforts to build these relationships.

If you get discouraged, keep in mind networking has a compounding effect. For example, if you make two phone calls a week, for 50 weeks out of the year, that is 100 phone calls. Think about how your efforts will add up over the course of your career. Most importantly, be patient. Consistent effort will pay off in the long run. Building your network is a marathon, not a sprint.