

7 Habits Of Highly Effective Rainmakers

By **Matthew Bultman**

Law360, New York (March 22, 2016, 4:28 PM ET) -- Rainmakers have worked hard for years to bring in business and build an impressive book of clients. While there is no magic formula for overnight success, these veteran attorneys still lean on certain habits to separate themselves from the rest of the pack.

There are a number of ways law's biggest business-generators got to where they are. But Patricia K. Gillette of Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP said something they all have in common is the ability to build relationships.

"Anyone can build a reputation," she said. "It's a person who can build a relationship with a reputation, that's the key."

Here, six heavy-hitters dish on the daily habits that helped them get to rainmaker status.

They're Always Thinking About The Next Client

Aaron L. Zandy of Ford & Harrison LLP said true rainmakers are always thinking about client development — from the time they get out of bed in the morning to when they go to bed at night. For these attorneys, marketing isn't an afterthought or something to be done when they have a bit of free time; it's all day, every day.

"They don't go anywhere without thinking about where the next client is," he said. "It's not a task for them. It's who they are."

And they don't miss a beat. Whether it's the CEO of a Fortune 500 company or an associate fresh out of law school, they've made it a habit to treat every interaction as a potential business development opportunity.

"The fact of the matter is the most junior person at your client or at your law firm is just as likely to be a source of business someday, or to be a decision maker that you want to do business with someday, as anybody else," said W. Morgan Burns, a partner at Faegre Baker Daniels LLP.

They Makes Themselves Available

Steven T. Miano, a shareholder at Hanglely Aronchick Segal Pudlin & Schiller, said client relationships are based on trust and confidence. A quick way to sour that foundation is to be the attorney that people

can't get a hold of.

"I'm always amazed at lawyers who don't respond to emails, who don't return calls," he said. "I think one of the habits of somebody who has a vibrant practice is being available to clients and them knowing that you're available to them."

That means attorneys need to return messages promptly, not wait until after the weekend or they're back in the office after a long vacation. Even if it just to respond to say, "I'll get back to you," at least let the clients know that you're thinking about them.

"Even when I'm on vacation, much to my wife's chagrin, I will still send emails and texts," said Michael A. Brown, a principal and litigator at Miles & Stockbridge PC.

They Call to Say Hi

These attorneys also understand the importance of checking up on clients unprompted, even if there isn't a pressing issue or important development in a case.

Brown said there's not a day that goes by where he doesn't reach out to contact either an existing client or a prospective client that he has been courting.

"There are an awful lot of lawyers out there, and when matters come up for clients and potential clients, if you're not on their brain, they'll give it to someone who is on their brain," he said.

For some attorneys, it can be helpful to get in the habit of reviewing client connections and recent calls, experts said. If there is a client you haven't talked to in a couple weeks, make a note to reach out, even if it's just to say hi.

"So many times, attorneys only call clients if they need something," Zandy said. "I like to call to say hi, to make sure I'm providing them with the best service. It's one of the most important things lawyers don't do."

They Get Involved

Rainmakers also make it a habit to stay involved in their practice area and branch out.

For example, Miano, an environmental lawyer, has taken opportunities to speak and write on environmental legal issues. He has also become a leader in various organizations, including the American Bar Association section of environment, energy and resources.

"I think prospective clients want to know the lawyer they're about to hire, or the lawyer they're thinking of hiring, really does follow all the issues and is involved with as many of the issues as possible," he said.

Along those same lines, it's important to frequent events where prospective clients might be in attendance, prepared with information that will be relevant to them or their business, according to Nancy Conrad, an employment lawyer at White and Williams LLP.

This requires a bit of homework. The crowd at a Chamber of Commerce event, for instance, might be different from a bar association event with other lawyers. But with the right preparation, each presents

its own opportunities to network and strike up conversations that could lead to future business.

“You need to be prepared to seize the moment so you are recognized and remembered as someone who practices in the area,” she said. “Then when the need arises, there’s a connection and they remember to contact you.”

They Get Personal

There are a lot of good attorneys out there, and chances are, at least one is able to do the work these business-generators do. Rainmakers understand that adding a personal touch to their client relationships can go a long way in separating yourself from the others.

“If people know and trust and like you, that’s probably the best way to truly differentiate yourself,” Burns said. “To me, the personal side has got to be how you differentiate yourself.”

This can be done in more ways than one. It could be something as simple as a quick email congratulating a client on their child’s high school graduation, or sharing travel tips for their upcoming trip to Hawaii. Perhaps someone has been looking for a new job, so you pass along information about an opening for a position they might be interested in.

Done the right way, these sorts of personal touches can go “miles in terms of building a relationship,” Gillette said.

But the one thing it can’t be is faked.

“It has to be authentic,” she said. “It has to make sense.”

They Recognize Client Needs

Rainmakers also recognize that when it comes to servicing existing clients, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. In order to stay effective, attorneys need to understand each of their client’s want and needs, and then tailor their approach accordingly.

Conrad said constant assessment is critical.

“One key focus is recognizing the needs of a client and stepping back and saying: ‘Is this the end product the client wants? And are we proceeding in a way to deliver that product?’” she said.

For example, Conrad said, a habit she has developed, particularly with new clients, is asking how they prefer to be updated during the course of litigation. Do they want to be copied and looped in on every communication? Or would they prefer only to get updates about key developments in the case?

“It’s an important habit to develop because clients are busy people and some don’t want to be bothered with communications that address scheduling or administrative issues,” she said. “Other clients want every single piece of communication. It all gets back to identifying the client’s wants and needs.”

They Read and Relate

Zandy’s mornings start the same way: He gets coffee and then scans court records, looking at every

lawsuit filed in labor and employment law. He also reads news articles, blogs and other publications so as to not miss a beat on what might happening in the industry.

“Exceptional lawyers know not only the clients they service, but they know their client’s industry,” he said.

Miano said if he happens to spot an article that he thinks might be of interest to a client, he’ll make a point to pass it along.

“I think it shows the interest you have in your clients, and oftentimes, it will lead the client to call just to say thanks,” he said. “It’s a good way to stay in touch.”

Conrad said she will provide clients bullet-point highlights of cases or rulings that might have implications for their work.

“I find the client, or prospective client, is much more appreciative because you’re relating information that is of value to them in a prompt and efficient manner,” she said.

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