

Get More Clients!

It's the only way to create a profitable business

By Anne E. Collier,
MPP, JD, PCC

How does a coach create a profitable business? Bring clients in the door, plain and simple. There are three keys to developing a client base. The first key is to build the prospect pipeline so that it is easy to stay committed to developing a viable business, but not attached to any particular prospect becoming a client. The second key is tenacity. The coach must be relentless in his/her networking and other business development activities. The third key is to have fun (yes, fun!). Who would want to hire a coach who isn't having fun?! A coach who is stressed about doing what it takes to share the benefits of coaching and is unwilling or unable to shift this perspective, quite frankly, needs to hire a coach!

The first two keys are intertwined. Understanding the step-by-step process for building business is a necessary component of developing the prospect pipeline with tenacity. If a coach does not know what to do, how can s/he be tenacious? A coach that follows the Business Development Model (BDM) will build the pipeline, develop a process s/he can



follow tenaciously, and ultimately have more clients and build a profitable business.

The BDM lays out a complete process for building the relationship, understanding the prospect's needs from the prospect's perspective, knowing when and how to ask for the work, and how to follow up. The steps are:

- Step 1: Question, Don't Pitch**
- Step 2: Offer Guidance**
- Step 3: Proposal/Pitch**

Step 4: Follow Up

Step 5: Close The Deal

Step 6: Do Great Work!

Step 1: Question, Don't Pitch

Whether you meet your prospect at a networking event, parent-teacher night, or through a friend, once you have made the initial contact, do not pitch your services. Instead, learn about the prospect's business and concerns, and let the prospect know that you might be the solution to a problem (but until you fully under-

stand the client's needs, you have no idea whether you have the ability to provide the solution).

Try to get the prospect to the point of asking or agreeing to a first meeting. Before going into that first meeting, you will have done whatever research you can on the prospect's industry, organization, and problem. Treat the prospect like a client. Utilize your coaching skills by asking open-ended questions that will allow you to identify points of pain and, most importantly, build the relationship.

Step 2: Offer Guidance

Start any meeting with a few niceties and small talk, perhaps even referring back to the initial conversation, the prospect's golf, game, or last week-

prospect has considered certain strategies. Finally, ask the prospect if it would be of value to him if you were to solve his problems. Be sure to articulate the problem and any related needs using the prospect's language.

Step 3: Proposal/Pitch

After the prospect has said "yes, it would be of great value if you would resolve issue x," look him right in the eye and tell him that you would be honored to solve his problem. Then ask if he would like you to send him a proposal or contract outlining what you have discussed and your fees, or offer to meet with others from his company, as appropriate.

Do not push him to hire you on the spot. If he is headed that way, great. If not, give him the benefit of time to re-

especially in smaller cases, that he hires someone else to implement your creative solution. Whether this happens will also depend on the strength of the relationship you have created. People are less likely to take advantage of someone they like, respect, and who took the time to understand their needs.

Step 4: Follow Up

A week or so has passed and the prospect is expecting a call. On the call, ask the prospect whether he has any questions about the proposal or contract. Do not be surprised if he has not read it yet. It happens. If that is the case, use the call as an opportunity to share additional thoughts. In addition, since both the prospect and coach have had a chance to reflect, new issues or concerns may have surfaced.

Go back to Step 2 and ask more open-ended questions, following with more closed-ended questions. Resubmit the proposal if necessary and make that follow-up call. If the prospect likes your proposal, you have one thing left to do: Ask for the work.

“Until you fully understand the client's needs, you have no idea whether you have the ability to provide the solution.”

end's Superbowl. Next, move on to the reason you are meeting: the prospect has a problem and you may be the solution. Ask open-ended questions so that you understand the prospect's needs, such as:

- What are your biggest concerns?
- What keeps you up at night?
- What has happened that makes you think this is a problem?

Once you have gathered sufficient information so you have a feel for both the problem(s) and the prospect, you can narrow the focus of your questions. You know your area of coaching and many of the facts, so target your questions towards possible solutions.

Clarify goals and ask whether the

flect upon learnings to gain additional insight.

Before leaving the initial meeting, be sure to ask if you can call him in a week or so to discuss the proposal. Do NOT, unless you absolutely cannot help it, leave the ball in the prospect's court. People get busy and often put off dealing with issues even when they can cause enormous problems.

A note about the proposal: the more complex the problem, the more elaborate the proposal.

Finally, you will want to give enough insight and support during the initial meeting and the proposal to ensure that the prospect believes that you have value to offer but not give away so much,

Step 5: Close The Deal

Asking for the work is one of the most significant challenges in developing business. What do you do to close the deal? What are the magic words? The truth is that there are no magic words to close a deal or at least if there are magic words it because you have laid the groundwork for the magic to work.

Successful requests have three elements: a rapport with the prospect, an understanding the prospect's problems, and finally, the problem must be important enough to the prospect that he is willing to commit time and money to solving it. A coach that 'makes the ask' prematurely is likely to fail.

“Do NOT, unless you absolutely cannot help it, leave the ball in the prospect’s court.”

It is surprising how many coaches feel uncomfortable asking for the work. After you have discussed the proposal, you want to ask the prospect if he has any concerns that you have not addressed yet. Here is where your personal style comes to into play. My advice is that you be yourself. If you are bold, you might ask, “So when do you want me to start?” Or, “So what’s stopping you from hiring me?” If you have a more serious demeanor, you might look them in the eye and say, “You know, I would be honored

to do this work for you. Would you like me to send an engagement letter over?” Either way, you must be yourself and you must be sincere. If you come across as phony or uncomfortable in your own skin, it is extremely unlikely that you will inspire trust and confidence. If you are yourself and follow the BDM, you will have a coach’s second biggest problem: too much work!

Step 6: Do Great Work!

Excellent work is the key to getting

more business through additional work with the client and through referrals. Invest in the client early on. Build the relationship and take the time to understand their issues. Visit the client as appropriate. A coach who does this will soon have an entrepreneur’s second biggest problem: too much work!

A final bit of advice: successfully developing your business is a numbers game and a little like dating; there is always the prospect that got away, didn’t get back to you, or just disappeared. To be successful, you have to stay committed to doing what is necessary to build your practice, but not attached to any particular prospect hiring you. Remember, if you seem desperate, you’ll be going to the prom by yourself.

Get the Coaches’ Edge Extravaganza Put Magic in Your Message and a Fortune in Your Future!

- Longing for an Upclose and Personal Event? Spend 3 days with 21 Top Coaching Experts & Your Peers!
- 3 Wisdom Circles + 4 Expert Panels + 4 Workshops + 9 Networking Sessions + 5 Keynote Coach Authorities + \$30,000 in Awards + \$3,000 in Gifts and Bonuses!
- + Breakfasts + Lunches + Exclusive Mansion Tour + Magical Evening Entertainment + Get Published!



The Magic Castle Private Mansion

Home of the Academy for Magical Arts

September 19-21, 2012 —

Right here in the USA, Hollywood, CA

Can't attend live? Join us virtually!

www.gettce.com