

Tactics for Competing in Turbulent Times

Panelists:

1. **David H. Freeman, J.D.**, Founder, David Freeman Consulting Group at www.davidfreemanconsulting.com
2. **Ann Lee Gibson, Ph.D.**, Principal, Ann Lee Gibson Consulting at www.annleegibson.com
3. **Charles H. Green**, Founder, Trusted Advisor Associates at www.trustedadvisor.com
4. **Laura A. Meherg**, Founder and Partner, Wicker Park Group at www.wickerparkgroup.com

Compilation of Tips and Tactics

1. It's major defense time regarding your best client relationships. Your best clients are about to get the big rush from all your competitors with value-adds, freebies, etc. Go out there and defend those relationships.
2. Never take actions thinking, "This is what you do in down times." Instead, think, "This is what you do in the down cycle of a relationship."
3. Do more face-to-face selling, and less broad-based marketing.
 - Identify your best clients and focus your time and resources on them.
 - Do not go in only with one-size-fits-all propositions; take the time to develop a value-adding point of view.
4. Leverage the power of reciprocity. Look for new ways your lawyers and your firm can be helpful to your firm's best clients, prospects, and referral sources. If you offer help and support to someone, they will help and support you in return.
5. Take advantage of other firms' weaknesses. Invest in these firms' highest-value practices, strongest teams, most effective rainmakers, and best clients.
6. Go to www.acc.com/advocacy/valuechallenge/ and make sure your attorneys are well-versed about the ACC's Value Challenge. Ask key client relationships what their thoughts are on the Value Challenge and what, if anything, their legal department will change based on the resources available.
7. What you can learn about your clients' needs, preferences, and values can give you a tremendous competitive advantage in this tougher environment. Ask your clients how they define value. Find out what they care about and what they value that none of your competitors knows about.
 - Arm your attorneys with "questions and talking points" for client conversations to better establish and manage expectations and understand their pressures, processes and business.
 - Receive feedback on:
 - How they're doing in the current market?
 - Is there is anything the firm can do to help?
 - How can we add value?

8. Host issues-based think tanks with clients and prospects to brainstorm solutions to problems impacting organizations across industries.
9. Reverse seminars. Invite clients to your firm to educate your firm on their industry and business or best practices in leadership development, diversity programs, etc.
10. Join clients for their strategic planning sessions.
11. Invite clients to attend your internal CLE's.
12. Identify potential cross-serving (selling) opportunities and coordinate an approach to offer added value.
13. Offer for younger (or other) lawyers to spend time on-site at a client's location.
14. Offer to review their materials and processes, e.g., employee manuals, contracts, IP audits, e-discovery process, etc.
15. Get lawyers to leave their offices when they don't have client work. Arrange face-to-face visits with clients, prospects, and referral sources. Create excuses to go on-site (visit, training, meetings, etc.) or meet elsewhere.
16. Create your own groups and invite clients, prospects, and/or referral sources to attend and present.
17. Help people get new jobs.
18. Proactively focus on an industry, identify upcoming needs, develop promotional materials, and arrange meetings.
19. Identify a local charity, non-profit or arts institution that is particularly hurting these days and that has a (reasonably) connected board. Give them some money. Partner with a client where appropriate.
20. Go to your main feeder law school and say you will honor the offers you make, rather than withdraw them in the face of economic hardship.
21. Don't just gradually up the rate of discounting—choose your moments strategically. If you're going to offer a discount, make it a big one, with a client who counts. Position it as a favor, not a concession—and be sure the client appreciates it as such.

22. Strategic deployment
 - Try offering people at one-third rates in key clients; invest now, when your clients can gain advantages on their competitors.
 - If you can't strategically deploy, then second them.
 - If you can't second them, then make a great effort to find places for them at client organizations.
 - Only if you can't do any of the above do you lay them off.
 - If you just lay people off, then spend your money on severance packages, not on prolonging the pain. Paying well for severance carries much more value going forward than the memory of how awful it was those last few weeks and months.
23. Improve client service and business development (selling) skills. Ask for coaching help from your firm's marketing, professional development, talent development, and H.R. groups.
24. Have leaders and marketing/business development professionals create ideas, drive actions, track initiatives, provide necessary reminders, communicate successes, and reward desired behaviors.

Additional Materials

<http://www.trustedadvisor.com/articles>

- "Selling by Doing, not Selling by Telling"
- "The Relationship is the Customer"
- "The point of listening is not what you hear, but the listening itself"
- "When Clients Demand Price Cuts"

<http://www.davidfreemanconsulting.com/monthlytips.html>

- Business Development and Leadership Tips of the Month

<http://www.annleegibson.com>

- "45 Tips for Law Firms—How to Create and Use Competitive Intelligence"
- "50 Tips to Help You Win Client Competitions"
- "Intelligent Competition"

http://www.wickerparkgroup.com/GC_conversations.php

- WPG GC Q&A- Interview series providing insights into what in-house counsel think of their outside lawyers, details on the inner-workings of the most successful attorney-client relationships, and key words of advice that in-house lawyers are eager to share with outside lawyers.