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What you need to know to get and keep new business

How to Lead a Revenue-Focused Group

BY DAVID FREEMAN

Leadership is a concept claiming no shortage of philosophies and approaches. Often we hear about the need for integrity, vision, courage, culture and the like. Those are all excellent concepts—but what are some tangible, proactive steps that lawyers can take to be more effective leaders in focusing their practice groups and client-service teams on generating revenues? To help make the connection between theory and reality—and dollars—here are a few suggestions.

1 Get everyone on the same page. Groups as well as individuals need different styles of leadership to raise their performance. If your group is going off in all different directions, it is high time for a planning meeting that reinforces common goals and steps for getting there. If you have underperformers in your group, some one-on-one coaching and goal setting can be extremely effective. For groups that don't work well together, appropriate team-building activities can enhance personal connections and collegiality.

2 Develop a tracking and reminder system. The biggest gap is not in the planning, it's in the doing. It's up to the leader to keep business development top of mind within the group. Use meetings, e-mails, phone calls, random office drop-ins and practice assistants to remind people of their commitments.

3 Delegate, delegate, delegate. Leaders often take on more than they should. While many things must get done, the leader should not do them all. Make lists of everything the group needs to accomplish, and then determine which tasks you must handle yourself and which can be delegated to others. Get as much adminstrivia off your plate as possible, so you can focus on truly leading the group.

4 Open the internal communications pipeline. One of partners' biggest gripes, especially in larger firms, is that they don't know what others do. As a practice group or client team leader, you need to communicate and arrange meetings with complementary practice groups. Tell them about recent client and business development successes. Share information about new plans. Arm them with three to five great probing questions they can ask their clients to see if needs exist.

5 Get the juices flowing. If your culture permits, stimulate activity by creating contests and rewards. Develop appropriate goals and measures and offer incentives for reaching them. Picking the right measures is crucial because they set the table for further revenues. Think, for example, of increasing the number of on-site client visits, meeting with referral sources, or arranging follow-up appointments from attending conferences. LP

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