

Taylor's Perspective...

## New Bus-Dev Book Offers Sage Advice from Many Smart Experts—Especially from the Author Himself

Like most writers in the legal trade press, I almost always visit a firm's Web site and read lawyers' bios before interviewing them. I'm struck by what I've found in performing this practice over the years: A very wide range of quality in content and style—from the very good to the good, the bad, and the ugly, and by ugly I mean borrrrrrrrrring. When I come across the bland-as-white-toast bios, I usually look for another attorney to call.

Evidence suggests clients often do the same thing, or at least they say that attorneys' Web site bios matter to them. In law firm consultant David Freeman's new book, *Secrets of the Masters: The Business Development Guide for Lawyers*, he cites a survey of general counsel by the consultancy The Wicker Park Group that discovered this: "100 percent [of the GCs] visited a firm's Web site when evaluating and purchasing legal services; and 90 percent said the attorney bio section is the most important section of the Web site and the one they visit most."

The message couldn't be any more obvious, and Freeman puts it well. "Clearly," he writes, "you need to pay significant attention to what your Web site says about you!" He then quotes Heather Morse, director of marketing at Barger & Wolen LLP and one of the more than two dozen business development "masters" who contributed insight to his book. Morse says lawyers need to provide "sticky content [that] glues readers to your Web site."

That chapter—number seven, entitled "Social Networking, Social Media, Web sites and Search Engine Optimization"—goes on to offer specific advice, which includes talking up your clients on your Web site. Earlier in the book, in a section about speaking to clients, Freeman writes about "telling war stories"—something that should also be done in Web-site bios. He then uses a strong, concrete example: "It's much more memorable to say, 'Gayle recently got a multi-million dollar dispute dismissed on summary judgment,' than 'Gayle practices complex commercial litigation.'" You, David, are absolutely right.

This all gets to the heart of what makes *Secrets of the Masters* so successful. First, it makes important assertions (clients visit Web sites and read bios) backed by solid research (The Wicker Park Group survey). Second, experts in the field (Morse) share intelligent advice (provide "sticky content"). Third, Freeman delivers sound, sweeping recommendations (tell "war stories") and then follows them up with specific examples (Gayle's victory).

### Freeman's Got It Goin' On

There may not be a better person in the legal profession to write this book (Freeman calls it a "report"), which is really a compilation of practical information derived from a DVD-based program Freeman created called the CMOPlaybook, in which he and

28 marketing and bus-dev experts discussed “best practices” and “proven tools” to generate new clients and nurture existing business relationships. Freeman has his finger on the pulse of today’s übercompetitive legal marketplace. During his nearly 20 years of consultation work, he has helped thousands of attorneys at hundreds of law firms serve their clients better, lead their associates more effectively, and of course hone their bus-dev skills, among other things. Full disclosure: He’s also contributed articles to *Of Counsel* as well as occasionally serving as a source for what I write.

In short, the guy knows what he’s talking about and—importantly—he understands how to present practical knowledge in clear, colorful and well-crafted prose. Consider how he starts the body of the text in chapter five: “Cross-selling is the Holy Grail for most law firms. Done well, it can generate significantly more revenue and deepen relationships with important clients.” That’s straight-forward and catchy yet not too-clever writing that grabs the readers’ attention and makes them want to read on. Notice that he uses strong, simple verbs—“generate” and “deepen”—something he does throughout the book.

Freeman employs a solid formula that works well. Each chapter begins with quotes from famous people, mostly athletes and coaches but also one from Woody Allen: “80 percent of life is showing up,” which fronts chapter two about networking. After summarizing the content of the chapter, he then introduces the “masters” who offer advice in the pages that follow. He guides readers through the chapter with anecdotes, facts, mini case studies and lots of recommendations, usually written in the imperative voice that directs readers to “think” about this and “do” that and “perform” this and “develop” that. Every how-to book needs such an approach. Finally, he includes “Action planning worksheets” at the end of each chapter with questions, directions, and goals that help attorneys turn what they just read into business development results.

## Sustaining Bus-Dev over a Career

In the ninth and final chapter, “Sustainability Techniques,” Freeman and his experts discuss the importance of the “follow-up” in making bus-dev outreach a career-long practice. James Stapleton, former chief marketing officer for Littler Mendelson P.C. as well as Fenwick & West LLP, describes an attorney he knows who “had none of the ‘Hollywood’ attributes [of] the typical rainmaker,” Freeman writes, “yet he was extremely successful at winning business. How?” In his own words, Stapleton answers: “Relentless follow-up. He would do that sixth, seventh and eighth follow-up when most people would have given up. [The attorney understood that if he makes] that sixth and seventh call, I know that I’m building up a relationship.”

Also in this chapter, Freeman recommends to law firm leaders that they “parade your rainmakers in front of the other lawyers and have them discuss how they developed their practice. Make sure to present different styles.” He then quotes Ross Fishman, a consultant in the Chicago area and another frequent *Of Counsel* source. “Typically, law firms will bring in one or two of the most productive rainmakers who are vivacious personalities, charming, gregarious and extroverted,” Fishman says. “However, lawyers often have introverted personalities, so to present only lawyers who aren’t like this to speak to new attorneys is a mistake. Find representatives who can demonstrate many different approaches to building a great book of business.”

You see what Freeman did there? Once again he makes an assertion and then supports and augments it with a strong statement from a professional who serves in the trenches. The seamless way in which the author interweaves his own views with those of his colleagues in the profession serves his audience well.

Now, the book’s not perfect; Freeman and his editor make a few minor glitches. The prose has some stylistic inconsistencies; Freeman writes “website” as both one word and two words, for instance, and hyphenates

and then doesn't hyphenate "follow-up" when used as a noun. There are times when Freeman "stacks" quotes, which is easily fixed by injecting some of his own sentences between long quotes from his contributors.

But that's nit-picking. All in all, *Secrets of the Masters* delivers the goods. It's

well-written, engaging, intelligent and practical. Every attorney—even those who are already very adept at business development—should read it. The valuable advice imparted will reap rewards: New clients and happier existing ones. ■

—Steven T. Taylor



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