

In my travels, I've had the privilege of speaking with several women and minority attorneys that are Partners at some top law firms. They shared with me what it takes to survive and thrive in a law firm. Several have begged the question, what does it take to make partner? It is clear that the most fool proof approach to becoming a Partner is to become a valuable asset to the firm. Your value to the firm has a direct correlation with the amount of clients and money walking in the door because of you.

Building a book of business can happen one of several ways. You could inherit a stack of clients through someone's mis-fortune, or you can wait for clients to be handed to you, or you could make it a point to build and acquire your own clients. Here are five things every partner aspiring woman and minority attorney should keep in mind.

Know the rules of the game:

Most established firms have a "Partner Track". For some it is 8 years for others it may be 4 years. New attorneys should know what the track is, otherwise you won't know what to reach for. Gain an understanding for what a substantial book of business look like to your firm. These figures are all over the board and depend on the areas of practice, the regional location and the size of the firm. Be ready when the offer for partnership is made. Know the buy-in amount. Also regarding rules; brush up on your ethics rules around marketing. They change slightly from state-to-state. If you are in a large law firm, with multiple locations, be aware that what works for your counterpart in Florida may not work for you in Colorado.

Make a Plan:

Document a plan for your business development. Yes, write a marketing plan. But here is the key, write a plan that strikes a balance between the "edges" of your comfort zone and "realism". One approach that I like to take with my clients as we prepare this plan is to begin with the end in mind. If you have a marketing consultant, help them understand what you know about the requirements for Partner. Be able to articulate the answer to these questions "Where do you want to be in five years? What kind of clients do you want walking through the door or ringing your phone? Can you describe them? How about in two years? What is your current closing ratio? How long do clients retain you; months or years? And how long does it take to win the business of a new client? Then, work the math. Basic algebra will help you see how many meetings and the amount of time you will have to spend to meet your goal.

**Minority
Attorney
Marketing**



Creating Opportunities:

You may do good work, but there is only so much room at the table for lunch with perspective clients. Only some will be invited, others will not. The best way to insure a seat at the lunch table, is to be the one issuing the invitation to lunch. Think of the lunch table as the stepping stone to the partner table. Understand that there are few at the top with your best interest in mind. To be successful you will have to create your own opportunities.

Mentorship for Partnership :

Especially important for new minority and women attorneys is to find a local Mentor. Make and keep the commitment to meet with that mentor at least once a quarter. Utilize those meetings to share your successes and to get feedback on your challenges. Prepare for your meetings by making a quick topic list. The topic list will help you engage your mentor about your progress. It should contain two things that have gone well and two things that were not as superb. Include a networking schedule in your marketing plan.

You are looking for local opportunities to focus on professional development and to build alliances with colleagues practicing law in your metro area. Show up on time and stay to mix and mingle with at least 5 colleagues after the program is over. If you are attending an all day CLE, invite your table neighbor or someone you don't know to lunch with you. Your objective in networking is to build alliances, and form relationships with colleagues practicing law in your metro area. Be prepared to answer this question for them, even if it is not asked. "Who would be the ideal client for them to refer to you?"

Remember, you become an asset by being good at what you do and by the amount of business you bring to the firm. These marketing tips can help you get on track. With a large book of business, you are less likely to be denied a place at the partnership table. In fact, you will be welcomed.

About the Author:

LaSheita Sayer is the Founder and Chief Marketing Officer of ZoZo Group, LLC. She is a graduate of the Business School at the University of Colorado at Denver, and an experienced marketer. LaSheita is also active in Colorado's small business and legal communities. She has presented to attorney members of the Colorado Bar Association on ethical marketing for attorneys, she volunteers with the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) and its activities with the youth in Denver, Colorado.

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