

# ASSOCIATE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Your career trajectory is largely determined by your ability to develop a substantial book of business. Law school prepared you for the substantive side of legal work, but did it prepare you to become a rainmaker? Here's a quick guide to follow today to set yourself up for success.

## Years 1-3

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Focus on cultivating your network, refining your skills, and delivering top-quality service. It takes 7-10 “touches” to convert a contact to a client, so get ready to play the long game!

### 1. Build your network

- / Attend legal industry events, conferences, and seminars
- / Join professional organizations and participate in passion projects
- / Connect with contacts, new and old, on LinkedIn

### 2. Get to know your clients, prospects, and referral sources

- / Set Google alerts on the companies and individuals you interact with
- / Visit your clients in person (e.g., office visits, site tours, etc.)
- / Invite them to meals, entertainment, firm events, and industry affairs

### 3. Build relationships with colleagues at all levels

- / Get to know them professionally and personally
- / Seek mentors who can provide guidance, feedback, and support

### 4. Stay informed on industry trends and developments

- / Subscribe to legal publications and newsletters to stay up-to-date
- / Follow influential legal blogs and thought leaders on social media
- / Share relevant content with clients, prospects, and colleagues

### 5. Offer help

- / Provide research for a pitch or proposal
- / Draft a blog or article for publication, sharing a byline with your partner
- / Assist with industry presentations and in-house training programs

### 6. Find your niche

- / Explore different areas of law to find your passion and develop expertise

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## Years 4-6

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Continue the steps from above and begin to focus on expanding your professional network, developing specialization, and honing essential skills. And remember, business development hinges on your ability to cultivate authentic relationships.

### 1. Continue building a strong external network

- / Spend at least 2 hours/week networking – attend industry events; participate in passion projects; catch up with friends, clients, and referral sources over a meal or shared interests

### 2. Cultivate relationships across your firm

- / Get to know your peers in other practices and offices. Invest in understanding their business, client base, and any low hanging fruit
- / Identify and pursue synergistic relationships – those that complement one another and often work together (e.g., M&A lawyers may need a tax, employment, environmental, or real estate lawyer on transactions)

### 3. Focus on specialization

- / Identify a specific area of law to focus on based on your interests and strengths
- / Take advanced courses or attend specialized training programs

### 4. Engage in thought leadership

- / Write articles, publish scholarly papers, or contribute to legal publications
- / Speak at conferences, seminars, podcasts, and in-house client trainings
- / Regularly share insights and knowledge via LinkedIn

### 5. Seek feedback and engage in self-assessment

- / Regularly seek performance feedback from supervisors, clients, and colleagues
- / Request LinkedIn endorsements and recommendations from colleagues and clients

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## Years 7+

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It's time to further refine your professional path and make strategic choices that will propel your success! Continue with the steps above and start to shape your long-term trajectory by solidifying your position as a respected legal professional and business developer.

### 1. Create a business development plan

- / Put pen to paper on key metrics (originations & billing), thought leadership goals, client targets, and client growth opportunities. Identify three for each category
- / Pinpoint an accountability partner to ensure you stay focused

### 2. Be a problem solver

- / Put your active listening skills to use by finding out your prospect's challenges, motivations and what keeps them up at night, and then identify solutions

### 3. Foster strategic partnerships

- / Develop relationships with professionals in complementary fields to create referral networks (e.g., forensic accounting, consulting firms, benefits administrators)

### 4. Don't get stuck in the friend zone

- / Ask for the business! If you've truly invested in cultivating that long-term relationship and you understand their issues/concerns, it's time to ask for the business

Have questions or need help? Contact us  
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