NO
ELMER
FUDD'ING!!

No Elmer Fudd'ing!!

Denise K. Drake

Do you dress up as a client hunter, wander into the business woods, and shoot at anything that moves? If yes, you are Elmer Fudd'ing. Remember him? Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck always got the best of Elmer because he never knew what he was really looking for…he did not even recognize the rabbit or duck he was hunting when it stood right in front of him. And, Elmer always ran out of ammunition before he could bag his prey.

Lawyers looking for clients are frequently no different than Elmer Fudd. They do not know exactly how the client they want to bag looks. They do not know where to find the elusive, unidentified client. And, they blow all their energy running around doing speeches, attending dinners, writing articles, and attending conferences without a plan. In other words, they shoot at every cloud in hopes there might be a duck behind one. When the real deal finally comes along, the lawyer is exhausted, frustrated, and may fail to take the action necessary to bag the prey.

How can lawyers stop Elmer Fudd'ing? The smallest and easiest step, of course, is to actually have a targeted, well-thought-out written plan, instead of shooting willy-nilly at anything that moves.

How does this happen? Where do you start? You might say I've tried writing plans before and I end up staring at a blank sheet of paper. Or, I just write down a bunch of stuff with no real thought because "I am super busy with other work." Come on – you know you recognize these thoughts, Elmer!

Let's make 2009 different! Start small. But, start.

First, pick whatever increased sales number you want to achieve. This is your goal. (OK, please do not lawyer yourself to death at this stage. No, you do not know for certain what you can do or what number is best. It does not matter. Just pick a number.)

For our purposes, let's assume you want to increase business by $100,000. At a **minimum** you must have a written, targeted plan devoting at least 100 to 200 hours toward business development. This is only 2 – 4 hours per week. You know right now there are 2 – 4 hours you simply waste away each week, doing next to nothing (gossiping, playing computer games, watching TV, going out for drinks with coworkers who already know you really well, taking a nap, etc.)

Next, you need to decide how you are going to spend those hours. Everyone knows relationships are at the heart of service selling – real new business comes to us in person. Accordingly, your business plan must be filled with face-to-face meetings. Plan at least 2 hours each week to meet a client, target, or referral source for coffee, have a drink with someone you met at a conference, attend an industry meeting, or get to know someone you do not know in the law firm. While brochures, articles, newsletters and websites may help build credibility and generate leads, they are no substitute for simply showing up. It takes you, in person, meeting with other people in person to really make a sale happen.

By the way, if you are a little introverted or nervous about meeting with people one-on-one, use the fact you are a member of a terrific law firm to your advantage. Take someone with you! This accomplishes many things – it makes it easier for you to actually do what you need to do, it accomplishes goals for the other member of your team, and it exposes the person with whom you are meeting to more than one member of the firm. Terrific!

Now, how do you actually get this all written down on that blank sheet of paper? How should your plan look – must it be as thick as a telephone book with names and contact information for many, many people? NO! Two or three pages are plenty. (Yes, I know many successful sales people have more pages to their plans…but we are talking about starting small here, doing anything instead of nothing – write a plan you will actually implement.)

On the first page of your plan, focus on existing clients. Identify specific dates when you will *leave your office* to go to the client's office. Make plans to meet as many people as possible at the client's office during these visits. You might offer to host a roundtable discussion with the client's executives to discuss a new industry development. You might have a monthly coffee meeting where you offer to discuss any topic of interest. You might focus on learning more about a particular part of the client's company. The only limit you have is the boundary of your creativity. (And, if you are not very creative, the only boundary you have is the creativity of your team members – this is why we are in a law firm!)

The more traditional football games, golf matches, concerts, lunches, and other outings can be productive when planned strategically. It is inevitable, however, that you will invite the same clients repeatedly to these events if you do not have a plan. Of course, in addition to planning which clients will be invited to different events, it is critical to plan which other lawyers will be invited. The goal is to introduce current clients to as many other lawyers as possible. Client teams are the rainmaker's most valuable tool.

Use the second page of your plan to focus on new targets. This list should include general counsel, specialty in-house lawyers, and business executives who may be able to give you business, but have not yet done so. Identify how you might meet these individuals, where you might be able to spend time getting to know them, etc. A word of caution – do your competitive intelligence work before you give any person a position on this page. New client selling takes much more time and energy than selling to current clients. Accordingly, it should be planned more strategically with knowledge that it will exhaust greater resources – the key is to avoid Elmer Fudd'ing!

List your top ten referral sources on your third page. What? You do not have referral sources? Well, you better get moving. As a service professional, you should have ten strong business leaders who understand your business and services, who like you, and who know or work with leaders at other businesses. Referral sources, of course, expect the relationship to be two-way. You need to be comfortable referring your sources to your contacts. And, you must know, it takes time to meet with your referral sources, to develop a good relationship. Your goal is to meet regularly to compare notes on industries, companies, and prospects; to see what introductions might be made; and to schedule those introductions.

Now – get your calendar out and figure out what normally works best for you. Carve out the time you want to reserve for sales, follow-up, etc. And, then protect that time – almost nothing should replace the time you carved out for face-to-face sales efforts.

Finally, fill the time several weeks in advance with actual appointments based on your written plan. Track the appointments and any follow-up you want to do based on the appointments. You will be amazed. You'll find this effort simple, focused, and not completely exhausting. Not Elmer Fudd'ing!