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Paula Black has advised law firms around the globe on everything from powerful and innovative design to marketing strategy and business growth. She is an award-winning, Amazon-bestselling author and the force behind **In Black & White** (inblackandwhiteblog.com), a blog dedicated to clear, straightforward advice and open discussion of legal marketing issues. For more information on Paula Black, her books and her company please visit paulablacklegalmarketing.com.

Law Firm Business Development... Prospecting for New Clients

Even though existing clients are a prime source for new matters and referrals, by no means should you neglect your prospecting for new clients. The key to expanding your client base is to think in terms of specific industries—health care or biotech, for example—rather than narrow practice areas. In other words, market what you want, not what you do—which means establishing Industry Practice Groups within your firm.

Identify which industries you wish to target

Consider first your existing relationships within a particular industry, as well as your firm's current expertise, then research the profitability and the sophistication of the legal work required. Look at projected growth of the industry in your geographic areas, and consider what competing firms have done.

Appoint strong and committed group leaders

This is a **critical decision** that should not be based solely on seniority or your current book of business. Industry Practice Group chairs have to be capable and effective marketers, willing to lead by example, are respected within the firm, and, above all, are **passionately committed** to the Industry Practice Group model.

Determine group members

It's a good idea to let your attorneys select the group or groups themselves. Some attorneys might want to participate in more than one group, and that's okay. But they should declare a **primary affiliation** with one group, not three or four.

Develop a Practice Group profile

Get the ball rolling by having the Group chair prepare a written profile that sets forth basic information about the Group, including current clients, referral sources, key trade organizations, etc. The profile serves as a starting point for discussions and as a roadmap for ongoing business development for the Group.

Hold the Group's first meeting

We suggest lunch meetings that last 60-90 minutes. Have an agenda and relevant handouts, track attendance, and distribute meeting notes within a few days after the meeting.

Meet monthly to discuss business development

For best results, Industry Practice Groups should hold monthly meetings that focus exclusively on business development. Lunchtime seems to work best for many firms.

Develop Industry Practice Group descriptions

Keep them short and easy to read...no more than 500 words. Avoid legal jargon and tortuous syntax. Include brief case studies that demonstrate the firm's industry expertise.

These descriptions can also serve as springboards for marketing materials for the Group.

Develop a Group Marketing Plan

Keep it simple and focused. Use the techniques discussed in Chapter 1.. For prospecting new clients, consider getting involved in industry trade organizations and seminars, and providing industry-focused law alerts and related communications.

Develop Individual Attorney marketing plans

This is the chance for Group members to set forth their contributions to the Group's plan, as well as their other marketing and business development activities. The latter includes enhancing relationships with existing clients and referral sources, and getting involved in key industry trade groups.

As the individual plans generate results, **New Client Welcome Kits** start a relationship on the right note. Include a letter from the managing partner, Industry Practice Group contact list, firm brochure, practice group description, and a client service pledge.

While you're at it, ask a new client the method (phone, email) and frequency of communications they prefer, then deliver updates and progress reports accordingly. **Invite new clients to visit your offices.** Introduce them to the lawyers, paralegals, support staff, etc., who comprise the Practice Group.

Provide adequate resources

As we discussed in the section on planning, most law firms spend 2-3% of gross revenue on legal marketing and business development. We encourage you to make it 3-4%. Most of these dollars should be invested in programs that enhance relationships with existing clients and referral sources.

Measure and reward desired behavior (even when it's not billable!)

Enlightened firms are finding ways to measure and reward non-billable contributions, including business development. Start by measuring non-billable time invested in **meaningful activities**. Consider establishing a bonus pool to recognize these contributions.

Look for meaningful results in 12-24 months

Results will not come overnight. It takes time to build relationships and see the results of an effective marketing program. Look for a payback in 12-24 months. If your firm develops and implements an effective industry group-oriented marketing program, **you'll see great results for years to come.**