

Wolf Theiss Lands New Clients at Business Development Retreat



By Larry Bodine, a business development advisor with a nationwide practice. He has helped 250+ law firms generate new revenue by devising strategies, conducting business development retreats and individually coaching attorneys. He can be reached at www.LarryBodine.com and 630.942.0977.

Training 300 young lawyers in business development at once is impressive. But inviting in-house corporate counsel to the training retreat and getting new business from them is over-the-top fantastic.

"Our biggest ROI was not only the business we received as a direct result of this exercise, but seeing what we had accomplished for these young lawyers. Priceless..." quipped Chief Strategic Officer Janis Nordstrom of Wolf Theiss, headquartered in Vienna.

Wolf Theiss' annual three-day retreat presented a platform for practice development never before seen in central, eastern and southeastern Europe. The firm, with more than 300 lawyers from 30 different nationalities, speaking more than 25 languages in 12 offices throughout the region, is composed of the first generation of lawyers to practice law following the collapse of communism. The average age of their lawyers is 34.

"Over the course of three days, we presented a program designed to unite the firm's highly diverse talent, with the goal of transforming these young country-specific 'technical' lawyers into more global 'trusted advisors' before a live audience of 8 corporate general counsel," Nordstrom said. "Unlike their western counterparts, our lawyers had never before been exposed to any high-level business development training, let alone undertaking in-depth market research and case study analysis in preparation for pitching to some of the most prominent General Counsel in the world."

Would you like to train your lawyers in business development at a retreat? Please see <http://bit.ly/euhzV4> to find out how you can.

To facilitate this effort, Wolf Theiss brought in eight General Counsel from world-renowned companies such as Siemens, EADS, Borealis, plus the Association of Corporate Counsel to work together with their lawyers. The GC panel included representatives from Germany, Belgium, France, Russia, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States. In a region that had no formalized legal business development instruction before, it was a coup to work hand-in-hand with lawyers of this caliber.

Five of the GCs gave the firm business after the retreat!

Preceding the training exercise, the general counsel discussed topics in a panel discussion, including:

- The characteristics they seek out in lawyers and firms they retain.
- What lawyers consistently do to irritate in-house lawyers.
- How firms have been able to favorably differentiate themselves from the competition.
- The trend in moving away from hourly billing.

The firm lawyers were then broken up into eight groups with each group being represented by lawyers from different countries, practice groups and seniority. In the exercise, the lawyers had to create a road map of solutions for a client's multijurisdictional legal issues and to provide advice on how to achieve the most successful business result. This exercise fit the firm's goal of breaking down silos, drawing upon diversity to achieve a "one firm, one voice" culture with similar standards of excellence in all offices.

Each group was sequestered to take on the case studies, working with one of the general counsel inside the room. This was a true test of real diversity with lawyers from traditional "hot-spot" countries such as Kosovo, Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia working together towards a common goal.

The results of each case study were then presented the following day to the general counsel, who then selected the legal team they would have hired, provided the reasons why had won and why the others had not. It was stipulated in advance that partners were not allowed to play major roles in the pitch to the panel, only associates.

As the EADS General Counsel said, "The Wolf Theiss retreat was an unforgettable event for me. I envy Wolf Theiss for having such a young and enthusiastic lawyer community which brings across the message of unlimited energy and commitment to the client with the optimistic spirit of emerging Eastern European countries."

For more on this topic, call:

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