

## Why Business Development Makes for a Happy Law Practice

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Legal career consultant [Kate Neville](#) says 20 percent to 25 percent of her clients affirmatively want to leave law practice, and many are willing to consider leaving.

**I can tell you why: it's because they let their *clients choose them*, as opposed to identifying an ideal client and *pursuing the client*.**

The unhappy lawyers are **order-takers at megafirms**, who become addicted to taking assignments from senior partners or other lawyers. They are also lawyers at small firms **who will take any assignment** that comes in over the phone. As a result, the lawyers collect a clientèle of a\*\*holes who make their lives miserable. The legal work is often wretched too, consisting of work a senior lawyer isn't interested in doing, or a file from a client who has been shopping across the Internet for the cheapest lawyer in town.

Compounding their unhappiness is the fact that they have no job security. They live in fear of the next round of layoffs or sweat making the next payroll.

### **Let me describe the happy lawyers:**

- They have a lot of business relationships. When they walk into a coffee shop or luncheonette, many people recognize them and say "hello."
- They don't take assignments, they *give* them.
- They control their own destiny and pursue areas of law that interest them.
- They are invited to positions of authority at their firm.
- They are never targeted for layoffs.

**I've just described the rainmakers.** These are lawyers who know who their [ideal client](#) is, and they put themselves in the circles where they are found. They have become industry experts, who speak and have leadership roles at trade associations, where they meet potential clients. They get out of their office, have coffee with a referral

source, lunch with a client, and spend an evening at a business organization meeting.

As I've long maintained, **business development is the key to happiness in practicing law**. I'm working with a smart second-year associate who wants to get started with business development; the reward will be job satisfaction for years to come. Nothing beats having your own clients. A clientèle gives you authority, independence and job satisfaction.

The beauty of rainmaking is that it is not an in-born talent. It is a skill that can be learned. Check out the video [Rainmakers weren't born that way, they were trained.](#)

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