

Networking vs. Business Development: What's the Difference?

By Kari Petrasek and Keri-Ann C. Baker

Networking and business development are not interchangeable terms. *Networking* involves building relationships that are useful and worthwhile to others. The focus of networking should be on how you can help another person not how that person can help you. *Business development* is relationship building to generate revenue.

Both of these techniques are creative processes, but each requires a different skill set.

Effective networking requires:

- creating an elevator speech;
- listening for ways to provide value;
- emphasizing your strengths (e.g., expertise, experience);
- avoiding monopolizing conversations;
- being genuine; and
- following up (multiple times).

Business development requires an entirely different approach. Effective business development techniques include:

- providing excellent legal services;
- targeting your existing clients;
- listening to clients for business opportunities;
- developing a distinctive selling style; and
- planning specific sales advances.

While networking builds relationships, business development involves identifying those existing and potential relationships that can turn into attorney-client relationships. Success in networking can lead to success in business development. To develop business, young attorneys must take a measured approach to using and creating networks, identifying the right business opportunities, and then asking for work. Whether seeking work from existing clients or potential future clients, a good business developer will make an educated pitch for business within their zone of expertise.

These topics and more were explored in a panel discussion called "Networking vs. Business Development" as part of the 2009–2010 ABA YLD Member Service Project "Making Connections: How to Develop Lasting Personal and Professional Relationships." **Watch for announcements of more "Making Connections" programs throughout the 2009–2010 bar year in *The Young Lawyer* and on the ABA YLD Web site www.abanet.org/yld.** These programs also are available for use by ABA affiliates.

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