

# Preface

SECOND EDITION 2014

When the Law Practice Management Section of the ABA selected me in 2007 to write a book on business development for lawyers, I concluded from my surveys and analyses of the market that what was missing in the business development literature—and what many lawyers sorely needed—was a practical guide to acquiring and refining the face-to-face skills necessary for winning and keeping profitable clients. That hasn't changed. It remains at the core of the *Field Guide's* mission.

What has changed—dramatically and irrevocably—is the market. Thanks to the Great Recession and vastly more powerful analytical tools used by corporate legal and financial professionals, businesses have radically changed the ways they evaluate and purchase legal services. And the firms seeking that work compete much differently than they did a decade ago. Thus, this new edition of the *Field Guide*. It builds on the first edition, and on the skills and tactics taught by The WJF Institute, to teach a new business-development culture for our “new normal” environment. It's not enough to survive in the current market. This book teaches you the skills and tactics needed to *win*.

What the first edition of this guide taught was radical enough in its day: that to win new clients or grow business from existing clients, lawyers had to do more than flaunt their impressive CVs and react to whatever problem a client already knew it had to address. “Solution selling” meant listening intently to understand a business’s needs and then tailoring legal solutions to those needs in a process that required insights and approaches somewhat foreign to many lawyers.

Because of how the business world has changed, that’s no longer enough. In fact, if the strategy is misused or misunderstood, it can lead to a destructive race to the bottom for commoditized, low-margin work and an endless (and culturally unstable) hunt for new business through lateral hiring. Winning in today’s market requires challenging a client’s notions of its legal needs by identifying strategic business problems and then translating them into legal solutions—in effect, solving problems the client didn’t clearly see and forming a true, trusting partnership. Making your team indispensable in this way, which calls for new skills in interacting with clients, will help clients justify spending outside an existing budget. This is the constructive, creative response to our new normal. It spells the difference between surviving and winning, between following and leading.

After fundamental concepts get established in the upcoming pages, this new edition incorporates the new normal methods throughout. To highlight particularly noteworthy changes from the previous edition’s approach, I use this symbol: **N<sup>2</sup>**

Like the Gems and Rules that distill important points in the text, New Normal lessons can be found indexed in the back of the book as well.

Careful readers of both editions will notice that nearly all of the first edition remains intact in this latest version. That is because the “new” approach is really what I have taught from the start. It’s instructive to place those lessons in today’s economic context. But my longtime clients and readers can rest easy: the changes herein are subtle and incremental, not radical.

Marketing, business development, and sales have been a way of life for me since 1963. In the 1970s and ’80s, I played a key role in helping the technology industry adapt to a major shift in its corporate customers’ purchasing practices, where the key to success was in moving from a model in which we sold the customers what they said they wanted to a model where the technology vendor provided an invaluable service—systems integration. The key distinction: as a technology vendor, IBM helped customers transition from primarily manual systems of bookkeeping, accounts receivable, inventory management, cash management, and governmental regulatory compliance to computerized information capture, management, and manipulation. In the legal world today, the corporate and institutional buyers of legal services are forcing the sellers to change rather than the sellers being the catalyst for change. Law firms generally lack the computing power, process management tools, skills, money, and people to lead or facilitate change.

This book reflects my experience both in industries and eras, as well as the wisdom of those who have influenced my thinking and work. To those who have in ways large and small helped shape the ideas and methods that appear here, I offer a heartfelt thank-you. To those about to encounter those ideas and methods in the pages that follow, I can assure you that they work.