Note: This paper is not intended to be legal or business advice, but rather only shares information regarding aspects impacting our firm’s growth and considerations for others looking to grow their practices. Each firm and/or company’s circumstances differ and are highly dependent on the specific facts and individuals involved. As such, the contents of this paper should not be relied upon as advice for a particular situation, but rather as a resource for information.

Introduction

In this presentation, we have been asked to discuss important issues for growing your small or solo IP practice. This paper provides a brief overview of our firm and discusses practical considerations relating to growing your practice.

Firm Overview

McNeill Baur PLLC is a 100% woman-owned intellectual property firm that provides comprehensive patent law services to the life science community.

Focused. We only practice in the area of life science patent prosecution, counseling, and USPTO contentious proceedings. We have more prosecution-focused attorneys with advanced degrees in life science or chemistry disciplines than many larger firms. Because our whole firm focuses on obtaining patents in the life science space, we can deliver the strongest protection for your valuable IP.

Recognized. McNeill Baur was nationally ranked in 2018 by Managing Intellectual Property (MIP) as a Notable Firm in its Patent Prosecution category, is a Certified Women’s Business Enterprise, and was named LMG Life Sciences 2017 IP Firm to Watch. Founding partners Rebecca M. McNeill and Amelia Feulner Baur, PhD, as well as partner Mary R. Henninger, PhD, also received individual rankings as 2018 MIP Stars.

Experienced. Our firm has twelve attorneys, one patent agent, one technical specialist, eight patent paralegals, and administrative support staff. Eight of our professionals have PhD degrees, one has a Masters degree, and one was a former USPTO examiner. Several of our attorneys hold leadership roles in widely recognized bar associations, including the ABA, the DC Bar, and the Boston Patent Law Association (BPLA).

We love science! Competent intellectual property representation starts with understanding your technology. With advanced degrees in the life sciences and experiences at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), we can efficiently come up to speed on your discoveries, providing you with exceptional service, and reducing your costs.
Growth Strategy #1 – Quality and Communication

Things tend to be busy in a new firm, with lots of competing tasks to accomplish. It is important to remember to talk frequently about standards for quality in the firm’s work and in the firm’s communication with clients and within the firm.

- **Every project should be of the highest quality.** We know clients often have tight budgets, but at the end of the day, clients and prospective clients will look at your work product.
- **Everything is visible!** In today’s environment our work is easily available for anyone to view and critique. It is a key part of your firm’s public identity—maybe the most important part!
- **Interact directly and honestly with clients.** Do not shy away from difficult conversations about the effort required to produce high quality work. Be prepared to negotiate with clients to mutually arrive at fee and budgeting arrangements to meet their requirements, while also giving you the necessary time to produce a work product meeting your standards for quality.
- **Work hard to communicate within your firm.** Effective internal communication helps to create and maintain a unified picture of your firm’s key philosophies and standards. The firm will be the sum of all its individuals, so make sure it all adds up!

Growth Strategy #2 – Maintain Connections

We know we must devote energy to supporting existing relationships and to take advantage of networking opportunities to make new connections. How we use those connections is critical.

- **Who are they?** Most of your initial clients will be people you already know, or relationships that you have already had in place. When you leave your firm and start your new firm, do not take those relationships for granted. You may have had relationship partners or others in your prior firm who helped keep those connections strong. In your new firm, you will have to make sure to tend to those things yourself.
- **Where to find new work?** Sources of other work are everywhere: clients from prior work experience, friends, alumni groups, former colleagues who have also moved on to other opportunities. Look for opportunities to connect and reconnect with these people.
- **Referrals lead to reciprocity!** In our niche business, conflicts of interest and expertise will necessarily limit our freedom and ability to take on clients. Make sure you know your network. When you cannot take on a client or project because of a conflict or because it requires expertise that your firm does not have, be prepared to confidently refer that work to a trusted connection.

Growth Strategy #3 – Marketing

McNeill Baur has been very successful in our marketing efforts on a tight budget. In fact, in the beginning, we had no budget for marketing and did everything ourselves. With growth we have been able to devote some resources to marketing, but we are still very thoughtful regarding our resources. Consider the following:

- **Surveys.** Take time to identify industry surveys that provide meaningful rankings at regular intervals. Consider their methodology and focus on organizations whose methods produce rankings that fit with your firm’s core philosophies. Participating in these surveys takes time and thought, but inclusion of these awards in marketing materials and on your website adds to and reinforces your public image. Through participation in surveys, McNeill Baur has been nationally recognized in 2018 by Managing Intellectual Property (MIP) for patent prosecution, and individual attorneys have also been recognized as IP Stars. In 2017 we were LMG Life Sciences IP Firm to Watch.
- **Newsletters.** McNeill Baur publishes periodic newsletters announcing the activities of the firm we believe support and enhance our identity in our marketplace. We encourage firm attorneys to participate in conferences, speak publicly, and author articles related to our work in the life
sciences patent prosecution and counseling fields. It’s important to balance frequency and content to assure that your Newsletters are received and viewed as interesting and timely, and not intrusive.

- **Website.** McNeill Baur’s website provides key information about who we are and our philosophies for the work we do. We include profiles for everyone in the firm. We have links to recent news and awards, and we update the site regularly with information of interest. It should be clean and avoid the need for multiple click to reach information.

- **Branding.** In all these activities, it is important to have a consistent appearance. Use of logos, fonts, colors, graphics, should all be carefully constructed so that all pieces are complementary and consistent throughout all marketing and advertising platforms (media, print, email, etc.). This goes even to the standard email signature used by everyone in your firm. These are small factors that if done without comprehensive consideration, can create an impression of disorder or disconnect.

**Growth Strategy #4 – Don’t Just Guess—Get Feedback from Clients to Know What is Working**

- **Ask for feedback!** We assume that clients are vocal, but not always! Sometimes the first time you know something is wrong is when they ask that matters be moved to another firm. This can be avoided by talking with the clients and specifically asking how things are going.

- **Ask about past experiences too.** When a new or existing client chooses to move work to your firm, ask what they are looking for. They will often be very forthcoming about why the work is being moved, and it is not always about the cost. More often complaints revolve around lack of responsiveness or delays in responding to their inquiries.

- **Use the feedback to reinforce your firm’s performance.** When your clients take the time to share their requirements and pain points with you, use that information to improve your services for all clients. Moving work from firm to firm is expensive and time-consuming—work hard to save your clients from that endeavor.