

Whom Did You Phone Today?

Small Steps to Focus your Legal Practice

I got a call a while ago from a contact of mine who had been working in the US for a couple of years. He said "I'm back in Canada and I need to reactivate my network." I connected him to a couple of executive search consultants I know and guess what... I haven't heard from him since. I know he got a few interviews and he may have even found a job but he didn't have the good sense or the courtesy to call me and keep his network alive. How do you think I'll react the next time he calls?

How many times have you met a contact, a colleague, a client or an acquaintance and closed a short conversation with "I'll call you"? How many times did you actually follow through?

Much has been written on the topic of networking, however, it's still the Achilles Heel that many of our clients struggle with. If you approach networking as this "big project" that requires a vast number of contacts, think again.



by Karen MacKay, MBA, CHRP
President

Think about the few relationships you value both personally and professionally and make them a priority. Start with *three* colleagues. By colleagues consider referral sources in your own firm and those in other firms. Think about colleagues you respect and to whom you'd refer a client. Call them. Don't hide behind e-mail – pick up the phone or meet them for coffee. Think about them as you read the newspaper... and send articles that may be of value. Start with three.

Chances are pretty good that each of those individuals is struggling, perhaps as you are. The fact that you thought of them and made the effort to call to see how things are going will make them feel valued.

The next challenge is setting up an easy process for staying connected. Days go by, weeks go by, months go by and work gets in the way. So use the tools you are comfortable with. Most of us use a some sort of calendar system depending on the platform, computer or PDA we use. Put in a recurring "to do" item and call each of those people 60 days from today's conversation. Give yourself a memory jogger about 30 days prior to your next call and keep notes of your conversations. Each of your contacts will think you have an amazing memory.

Sound simple? You bet.

Now, next week, call three more people. Same routine. Same reminder. Your network is starting to build.

In professional services we have to make the phone ring. It doesn't ring by itself. If you say to someone "I'll call you" and don't, credibility is lost. If you say to someone "I'll call you" and do, you move up several notches in the receivers scale of respect. Why? You already know.

Networking is not about getting. It's not about connecting with people for the sole purpose of getting work, referrals or anything else from them. Networking is about giving. If you read the newspaper with three people in mind, a couple of times a week, it will become natural. Never assume that everyone indeed reads the paper as you do. I can't tell you how many times (between phone calls) I have sent an article out with a message like "you probably saw this in today's paper but in case you didn't..." and I received a call back. If you give someone in your network a pearl of wisdom or a bit of current news that he or she can use to advantage, you have just set up a quid pro quo. There's the magic.

Remember those conversations that end with "I'll call you". I'm one of those people who do my best work in the car after the meeting. I am brilliant, witty and articulate...in the car on the way home. Sound familiar? I, like many of our clients, am an introvert by nature. Chances are pretty good that the colleague who said "I'll call you" to you is an introvert too. Chances are pretty good that your introvert colleague finds networking a chore. So take the lead. Make the call. Begin with something like "after we met yesterday I thought..."

In their book "The Power of Focus", Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen and Les Hewitt share a quote from Robert M. Pirsig. "It's hard when contemplated in advance, but so easy when you *do*."

If you contemplate "networking" as a big thing, it can be overwhelming and intimidating. Start small. Three people at a time.

Whom did you phone today? Is there someone you could call today? Don't make a big deal of it. Think about three people you know and *like* – call them. They'll appreciate it.

Simple Steps to follow:

1. Call three colleagues
2. Put in a recurring "to do" item and call each of those people 60 days after the conversation
3. Remind yourself 30 days prior to your next call and keep notes of your conversations
4. Call three more people next week, same routine, same reminder

Take the lead, make the call



This article originally appeared in the November 12, 2004 issue of [The Lawyers Weekly](#).

[Print PDF Version](#)