

10 Ways to help your partners & lawyers win business

Train – Develop - Support



Phil Gott says:

“Over more than a decade I have trained and coached thousands of lawyers and other professionals in business development and selling. Now, more than ever, law firms are recognising just how essential these skills are.

For many firms, business development is *the* number one priority for 2011.

Here I have identified 10 things you can do to help your partners and lawyers to greater success. Many can be done with little or no external input or cost.

I would be happy to offer advice, so why not call me to discuss how you can get some quick wins for your firm?”

A handwritten signature of Phil Gott in black ink, written in a cursive style. The signature is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Table of Contents

1. Make it matter.....	2
2. Start measuring what matters	2
3. Codify your sales processes.....	2
4. Change unhelpful and misguided attitudes.....	2
5. Help people use the tools available to them.....	2
6. Provide effective training and development to help people win new business.....	2
7. Get people playing to their strengths.....	2
8. Make your firm’s products & services easy to sell.....	2
9. Equip partners to use alternative pricing	2
10. Get partners and associates to focus on existing clients	2
10 Ways Phil Gott can help your partners & lawyers win business.....	2

1. Make it matter

If winning business really is a high priority for your firm in 2011, make sure everyone acts as though it is. They may have been told so in your managing partners' New Year message. If asked, they may even agree that business development is a priority. But do your partners and lawyers all *act* like it is?



To change behaviours and get real results you need to:

- **Keep reinforcing the message.** Messages that are repeated tend to stick. For example, if you don't already have a firm-wide business development bulletin to publicise activities and celebrate successes, why not start one? Circulate it weekly.
- **Show support from the top.** Managing partners, department heads and partners all need to be seen to support business development initiatives.
- **Let individuals know what is expected of them.** In concrete terms. Make a point of rewriting their appraisal objectives, or help them set a personal business development plan.
- **Recognise and reward good performance.** What gets rewarded gets repeated. So praise and reward actions that, when repeated, will lead to success.
- **Allow no excuses and no exceptions.** All partners and fee earners should, in some way, be involved in business development. It is just a question of finding the best way for each to contribute and making sure they do.

2. Start measuring what matters



Most firms measure chargeable hours, billings and recoveries. These may be important measures, but they tell only part of the story, they are backward looking, and they can actually discourage some appropriate business development activities.

There is no single right set of measures for any firm. They are likely to be different for different practice areas and business units.

To start measuring what matters you need to:

- **Trace to the cause.** Start by clarifying the business outcomes you want to achieve. Then identify what activities cause those outcomes to occur. Measure activities not just results.
- **Involve partners and fee earners.** Engaging people to help identify the most suitable metrics helps to get their support, which will be important. Reassure them that the metrics will be a tool to help them, not a weapon to beat them with.
- **Be innovative.** Accountants like to have aged listings of debtors and creditors. But what about aged listings showing when clients were last contacted. Think creatively.
- **Ask partners and fee earners to start recording the new metrics.** Getting people to focus on certain metrics (such as numbers of articles published, seminars delivered, contacts made, etc) can itself bring about improvements.
- **Give people meaningful and real-time reporting.** Help people manage their own performance.

3. Codify your sales processes

Most organisations, including your own firm, will have documented policies, procedures and manuals for important processes. It should therefore be no surprise that successful sales organisations document their sales processes in just the same way. It makes sense doesn't it?

So if business development really is now a priority, you should codify a sales process suited to your firm, its clients and services.

Putting things down in writing helps to clarify thinking, pools good practice, and provides a helpful manual to guide people.



To codify your sales processes you should:

- **Involve people.** Partners and staff will want to have a say and involving them helps to get their commitment.
- **Incorporate best practice.** This is an opportunity not simply to codify what is currently done, but to develop an approach that incorporates current strengths with best practice.
- **Tailor the process.** Whilst the broad principles will remain the same, there will be differences for different practice areas, types of client, and different services.

4. Change unhelpful and misguided attitudes

Many professionals misunderstand effective business development and selling. Accordingly they unnecessarily avoid it or force themselves to do things that just do not work for them, reinforcing their belief that they are no good at it.

Without changing misguided beliefs, most skills training will be ineffective. You need to start by changing attitudes.

Here are some of the areas to focus on:

- **Help people see selling as highly professional.** Effective business development and selling are not about being pushy or about having the “gift of the gab”. They involve putting clients’ needs first, showing a keen interest, and helping them get what they want. Viewed this way, it would be unprofessional not to do it!
- **Change self-limiting beliefs:** Many professionals avoid business development, thinking they are no good at it. In reality, most professional people already have the skills they need. They simply need to use them in the right way.
- **Stop them assuming it costs money.** A lot of people think of business development as synonymous with entertaining, corporate events, and long lunches. Expensive entertaining is usually not necessary, and is often not appropriate. Effective selling is a process not an event. Even with a lower budget it can be done better than in the past.



5. Help people use the tools available to them

Ineffective business development not only wastes time and money, but leads to disillusionment and can squander what could be valuable new business opportunities.

Many firms have lots of business development activities (seminars, articles, networking events, etc) but unless their partners and lawyers are using them in the right way they are unlikely to turn contacts into clients.

Here are just some ways to help people make the best of the business development tools available to them:

- **Use business development tools as stepping stones.** Mailings, articles, seminars, networking events, telephone calls – all have a part to play but none is sufficient in itself to win a new client. They need to be used in conjunction with each leading naturally to the next. For example, every time a professional writes an article they should be asking themselves what next step they would like a reader to take, and then making it incredibly easy to do so.
- **Get them to use networking effectively:** Networking, done well, can generate excellent contacts. Yet many professionals think that “working a room” and exchanging business cards is a result. It is not. The aim should be to offer favours – selfless acts of kindness – to useful contacts. This approach makes networking easy, even enjoyable, and builds strong relationships rather than just a list of names.
- **Help people understand and use on-line social networking.** Some people dismiss on-line networking as a fad and a time-waster. Yet like other tools, used in the right way, it can be an easy way for professionals to keep in touch with contacts and even to establish themselves as a thought leader in a focused niche.



6. Provide effective training and development to help people win new business

Most professionals are not naturally good at business development and selling, or at least they *think* they are not very good. Either way they need help to build their skills and confidence.

Lawyers spend years developing their technical expertise. It stands to reason that some time should be invested in developing this other increasingly important aspect of their role.

Here are some ways to make the learning process as easy and beneficial as possible:

- **Make it OK to want to change and learn.** Help them see that successful people make a point of stepping beyond their comfort zone and learning throughout their careers. Training is not for people who under-perform, it is for people who want to excel.
- **Use modern methods.** Traditional classroom training is costly and mostly ineffective. Much of it can be replaced by carefully selected on-line resources supplemented by hands-on training. Providing easy access to quick tips, micro learning, and regular drip-feed updates costs little and aids informal learning.
- **Provide practice.** Developing selling skills needs guided practice. Whilst the thought of “role plays” is a turn off for many people, providing realistic practice sessions in which learners are not role-playing but being themselves, is usually welcomed.
- **Use coaching.** Coaching is particularly well suited to partners and senior professionals because it takes relatively little time, can focus directly on areas that will deliver quick wins, and is seen by many as less threatening than group sessions.
- **Hold rehearsals.** Whether for important sales meetings, pitches or review meetings with existing clients, rehearsals are invaluable and can make the difference between winning and losing.

7. Get people playing to their strengths

There is no single right way to develop business. It would therefore be misguided to impose a single approach or to expect all your partners and lawyers to carry out the same business development activities.

Instead, help people identify and play to their strengths, choosing an approach best suited to them and their type of clients.

Here are some ways to help your people play to their strengths:

- **Get people to focus.** To be competitive each of your partners needs to be best at something. Help them identify what they can become best at (be it a new and in-demand service, a particular market sector, or perhaps delivering a truly outstanding service for a specific type of client). Then show them how to focus their business development efforts. By concentrating on one area, their efforts will accumulate rather than be dissipated.
- **Help people recognise their strengths.** Many people are blissfully unaware both of their strengths (which they may take for granted) and their weaker areas (about which they may be oblivious). Provide them with effective feedback (from colleagues and clients) and give them access to self-assessments.
- **Focus your training on strengths.** In the past much training has focused on overcoming weaknesses. There is now compelling evidence that building on strengths – turning someone from being good at something to being excellent at it – gives a much higher return.



8. Make your firm's products & services easy to sell

One of the reasons so many cross-selling initiatives have failed to deliver is that partners and associates have such a limited understanding of other practice areas and their services.

And because lawyers are trained only to offer advice in their area of expertise, they are hard-wired to avoid raising issues that might stray beyond that (even though doing so might open up opportunities to cross-sell for other practice areas).

One answer is to make your firm's services easier to sell. Here are some ways you can do this:

- **Tell them what questions to ask.** The first and most important stage of selling is uncovering client needs by asking questions. This is easy, if you know what questions to ask. Appoint a champion for every product and service your firm offers and get them to pull together a few great questions that will help to uncover needs.
- **Craft "sales triads" to help people sell.** Once needs have been identified, the next stage in selling is to show how you can help clients. Sales triads are a powerful way to do this by combining the features and benefits of a service with, very importantly, a success story. Pooling success stories and crafting suitable triads is another job for service champions.
- **Put on some speed networking.** Once the ground work has been done, hold an internal exhibition or, even better, some speed networking, to help people get to know your firm's services better. It is quick, fun and effective.
- **Don't expect people to cross-sell.** For professionals, selling services about which they do not have an in-depth knowledge will always be more difficult. So instead, get them only to ask questions that will uncover client needs, and then to introduce a colleague who will do the rest.

9. Equip partners to use alternative pricing

Judging by the legal press recently, 2011 could be the year in which alternative pricing methods really start to take hold. It will be a big change for the profession because time-based billing is so entrenched.

Yet with clients increasingly questioning fees and insisting on alternatives to hourly billing, there will be pressure to change. So if change is inevitable, why wait to be forced? Instead, seize the initiative and make a positive virtue of alternative pricing.

Here are some things you can do:

- **Make sure partners know what types of services they are offering.** When it comes to pricing there is a world of difference between commodity services and high value services (and a whole range in between). It may seem obvious, but many professionals fail to see the difference.
- **Help partners to sell value.** The value of your services is determined in the minds of your clients. Help your partners become skilled at using basic questions to understand clients and also at using “high gain” questions to help clients recognise the true value of your services.
- **Change the fixed fee = low fee mentality.** Many professionals assume that fixed fees mean low fees. That does not have to be so. Indeed, use of fixed fee agreements can improve profitability.
- **Face up to commoditisation.** Some services, though by no means all, will be seen by clients as commodities. Through skilful selling it may be possible to move some out of the commodity category. For others you will need to relentlessly automate, webify, standardise, productise, outsource, and offshore to make a profit at a low fee.
- **Help partners deal with objections about fees.** Some partners cave in and crumble when clients challenge fees. The key is to show partners how to pre-empt such objections and, if they do arise, to deal with them confidently. They need to know that going soft on fees starts a spiral of despair.

10. Get partners and associates to focus on existing clients

In most firms, existing clients are an untapped goldmine of potential work. It will usually be easier to win more work from existing clients than to win a new client.

Yet many professionals chase new clients at the expense of spending time with existing clients.

Here are some things you can do to point your lawyers in the right direction:

- **Turn off the clock.** Allocate partners and associates some non-chargeable time to spend with each of their major clients. Get them to use it to show a genuine interest in the client and, if possible, to uncover unmet client needs your firm could help with.
- **Introduce client care reviews.** If your firm does not already have a programme of client care reviews, introduce one. They involve structured meetings to get feedback from clients. Clients tend to welcome them and they provide an opportunity to impress and strengthen important client relationships.
- **Help partners get client recommendations.** Most clients want to be able to recommend impressive service providers to their contacts: “Hey, you won’t believe what my law firm did...”. So help your partners do something truly remarkable and give clients a story they can tell.



10 Ways Phil Gott can help your partners & lawyers win business

1. **Interactive presentations on business development and selling**
2. **Facilitating a workshop to develop a sales process**
3. **Consultancy to help introduce and win support for new approaches**
4. **Training in client care, business development and selling**
5. **Coaching to help develop and implement BD plans**
6. **Rehearsals for pitches**
7. **Business development assessments**
8. **A virtual academy, with tailored resources on business development**
9. **Workshop on “Pricing for Value and Profit”**
10. **Or just contact me to talk through your priorities and plans:**

philgott@peopleism.co.uk

+44 (0)1908 551285

www.philgott.com

Feedback from some of Phil’s clients

The training session was very relevant and particularly geared to my needs and was very positive. I came out feeling I had achieved something good.

I saw a radical improvement in my basic skills immediately. Highly recommended.

Practical sound advice from someone who knows his business.

Well structured session giving practical advice, which could be related to actual circumstances.

It was a terrific confidence booster

Wonderfully practical. Phil not only ‘teaches/advises’ but translates into action.

A number of practical tips, which when tried out clearly made a difference for the better.

This is probably the best training I have had in this firm.

Probably one of the best sessions like this I have attended. All credit to Phil Gott who was personable, informative and could communicate his ideas well. Excellent.

Friendly, open and provided an encouraging yet critical where necessary input. Very impressed!

Phil was very informative – he managed to make very helpful comments and correct faults without offending. Much less stressful than I thought it would be.

Very personable, a positive approach, non-dogmatic and I appreciated the follow up notes.

Ideal, personable, interested, sympathetic, this firm should use him again

Excellent. Down to earth valuable comments, incisive approach. Really worth speaking to, very helpful.

Brilliant! Follow up letter was useful reminder of what was covered.

Very practical session, working on your strengths and weaknesses rather than trying to make you into something else.

One-to-one session was brilliant – improved my confidence no end – gave me very useful tips. Absolutely fantastic! Invaluable!

I would not have believed that one afternoon could make such a difference. Phil obviously knows his stuff!

The trainer was very helpful, interesting and inspiring. He made you believe that you could do it!

Excellent course. It gave much needed confidence to ‘jump in’ and have a go.

Phil Gott was excellent, I have been on a course before but Phil’s was much better. What else can he do for us?

Phil Gott was very good. He made me feel very comfortable and really took the time to work on things that I was weak at, but also reassured the positive things.

The notes and handouts are excellent and together with Phil Gott’s advice throughout the session the course will prove invaluable. It was an excellent course and I can recommend it without hesitation.