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Broward County Bar Association

1051 SE 3rd Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL33316
954.764.8040

letter from the young lawyers' president



Jeffrey M. Wank

The Rainmaker

Our October luncheon featured Howard Wolkowitz, a financial advisor with AXA Advisors, LLC. Howard's presentation, Marketing and Developing Business, focused on the ability for younger lawyers to bring in business, and eventually, become a "rainmaker."

During his presentation, Howard quoted a very successful lawyer from Broward County:

"There are two kinds of lawyers. Lawyers who work for lawyers, and lawyers who work for clients."

This quote resonated with me. When you think about it, it is true. You either have

business which comes directly from your clients, or work is assigned to you by your firm, typically through a partner. After the seminar, I thought more about what it means to be a lawyer who works for clients. In today's market, this designation could make all the difference. Sure, exceeding billable goals, working late hours, and producing exceptional legal work may earn well deserved praises and potentially launch a lawyers climb up the ranks within the firm. But in reality, the best way to secure your future and ensure a paycheck is by bringing in business. One of my mentors once told me that in order to make partner, I would need to become "indispensable" to the firm. Certainly carrying a book of business would go a long way towards becoming "indispensable."

But we all know this, and I am not sharing anything new with those who have managed to read through the preceding paragraphs. However, it is critical that younger attorneys, and even more seasoned lawyers, realize that becoming a lawyer who works for clients is not an impossible achievement, no matter what area of law you practice. Waiting until you become the face of the firm, more seasoned, or even until you have a few more grey hairs, is a grave mistake. Go out and network, and explain to potential clients why they should hire you now. Come to Young Lawyer Section events and practice selling yourself in front of your peers.

It is no secret that I network a tremendous amount, but I never interacted with potential clients with the mindset of truly obtaining business. Of course I wanted to bring in business (who doesn't?), but I found myself concerned about coming across too aggressive. Another challenge was that my firm's clients are mainly insurance companies, and I felt it was nearly impossible to connect with a large company at such a young age. This was a mistake.

Thus, my personal/professional goal this year was to change my approach and network with a purpose. I sat across from my boss during an interview in January 2015, and I stressed to him the importance for me to become a lawyer working for clients. But could I deliver? I am pleased to report that over the past several months, I have brought in several new cases through a new client.

I share this story so that other young lawyers may become more proactive. Setting up a dinner with a potential client and having a conversation about how you and/or your firm can benefit that client, can go a long way in making you become a lawyer who works for clients, and eventually, a rainmaker! 