

Rainmaking 101

The **fundamentals** of business development are ostensibly gender-neutral, but in practice, for one thing, female attorneys have to work **harder** at being recognized.

Stacy Phillips is a family law rainmaker at Century City's Phillips Lerner & Lauzon.

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As the practice of law becomes increasingly gender-neutral, so do the ways attorneys approach business development. Indeed, many of the most prominent female attorneys in California believe that the "old boys network," once at the core of the client-referral process, has largely become a thing of the past.

These high-powered women say they employ the same basic strategies as men: do quality work and develop the key relationships that bring in more work.

The women are quick to add, however, that things aren't quite that simple.

According to the American Bar Association, women make up 30 percent of the attorney population but only 15 percent of law-firm partner and 5 percent of managing-partner populations. They also earn, on average, \$20,000 per year less than men.

Women continue to face discrimination in the legal profession and, as a result, unique challenges in the area of business development.

The general framework for business development may be gender-neutral, but the details of going about it seldom are.

Getting Noticed

Almost everybody agrees on the first ingredient to generating business.

"First and foremost, you have to be a good lawyer," Patty Glaser, a rainmaking litigator at Los Angeles' Christensen Miller Fink Jacobs Glaser Weil & Shapiro, says.

Glaser should know. Her \$10 million-plus book of business includes entertainment giants Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc., Sony Corp., Paramount Entertainment and The Walt Disney Co.

But even top female attorneys have to work harder at being recognized.

"I still have to doubly prove myself," Stacy Phillips, a family law rainmaker at Century City's Phillips Lerner & Lauzon, says.

Her high-profile clients have included former Miss USA Deborah Shelton and former baseball star Daryl Strawberry.

Mary Cranston, firm chair of San Francisco's Pillsbury Winthrop, blames persistent cultural biases.

"A tall, commanding white man is generally going to be perceived as more competent," she says.

Cranston believes that women can help offset this bias by boosting their "credentials." Writing legal articles and speaking at conferences are effective ways of highlighting expertise.

"All lawyers need to get credentialed, but this seems to be particularly important for women," she says.

It's even more important, she believes, for younger female attorneys who don't have a long track record.

Phillips says she often faces an additional bias just for "looking young," forcing her to "triply prove" herself.

Carl Terzian, whose Los Angeles-based Carl Terzian Associates runs more than 800 networking functions for business professionals each year, echoes Cranston's emphasis on building credentials.

He says that men dominate many high-profile activities, like serving on boards of organizations



or government committees. Women, therefore, have to work harder to carve out their space.

"It's primarily been the turf of males, but I think that's changing," he says. "Women are forced to be more aggressive about it."

Getting noticed within the firm can be a similar battle. Terzian believes that women should be more aggressive about getting on the attorney teams that handle the big clients.

Similarly, Phillips believes that women should have an ally with the higher-ups.

"It's a question of being seen by people who have the power and the control," she says. "You have to do great work but you have to be visible, too."

Building Relationships

In business development, quality lawyering is only half the battle. Marketing is also important, and the key here is building the personal relationships that land clients.

"Practicing law is not a 9-to-5 job," Martha Jordan, managing partner of Latham & Watkins' 270-attorney Los Angeles headquarters, says.

"If you want to be at the top, you have to perfect your personal skills and interactions with others," she says.

Like gaining recognition, this is gender-neutral advice but more challenging for women. The "old boys network" may be fading, but most clients and potential clients are still men.

Given this equation, Phillips believes the key to

'I still have to doubly prove myself.'
— Stacy Phillips, a family law rainmaker
at Phillips Lerner & Lauzon (photo).



successful social engagements is simple. "You have to be comfortable with both sexes," she says.

Jordan agrees. She admits that it can still be "awkward" for a female attorney to initiate a meeting with a male client, given that the gesture could be misinterpreted.

"I think men have never quite been sure how to take any of that," she says. "We're seeing an interesting evolution of genders mixing in the professional world."

Jordan says, however, that women can take advantage of the blending interests of male and female clients.

"We have male clients who want Hollywood Bowl tickets and women clients who want the Lakers tickets," she says. "The range of business development activities is much broader these days."

Cranston suggests that women can avoid potentially awkward situations by making activities group oriented.

"If you're inviting male clients to a baseball game, you can invite other male and female attorneys from your firm," she says.

Female attorneys also can take advantage of the burgeoning number of women coming to power in other professions.

An "old girls network" doesn't exist, of course, but female attorneys may have an advantage in developing relationships with female executives and female general counsel.

Another positive development is the growing acceptance by law firms and other businesses of reduced office hours in favor of family time.

Women remain more likely to handle child raising, but this commitment doesn't have to bring their careers to a halt. An increasing number of female attorneys are taking advantage of part-time work options to keep their business relationships fresh.

"There's nothing inconsistent with being a part-time lawyer and developing business," Jordan says.

Even for the full-time working mom, she says, social activities abound.

"A wonderful trend of the last few years is that many more clients like to spend time with their families as well," she says. "There are now many more family activities from a business development standpoint."

Cranston has overseen similar developments at Pillsbury. The key seems to be keeping in mind that marketing is a 24-hour job — and that can include family time if so desired.

"Some of our most successful rainmakers have found clients through their children's schools," Cranston says.

The Art of Bragging

Making the social rounds isn't enough. Once there, an attorney has to know what to say.

Sara Holtz, a principal at Granite Bay's ClientFocus, a client relations consulting firm, says that this is the area where women most commonly fall short.

"Women in general have more trouble going out and talking about what they do well," she says. "Often they've grown up in a situation where they were taught not to brag or draw attention to their achievements."

Holtz often works with women on coming up with "short bragging" speeches that detail specific problems they helped clients solve.

Allison Leopold Tilley, a high-tech corporate rainmaker at Pillsbury's Palo Alto office, also sees "bragging" as a gender issue.

"Women tend to be more modest," she says. "You have to remember to let people know what they're capable of. I find myself mentoring women associates who I think are selling themselves short."

More than overt bragging or telling "war stories," women often are forced to just stick up for themselves. Clients tend to assume that the female attorney is the junior attorney.

"You have to be a little more forceful to make people know where you fit in the scheme of things," Tilley says.

Just as important is asking potential clients for work. Men, in general, are much more bold in this respect.

"That's something you really need to do," Jordan says. "I still have to consciously remind myself to do it."

Cranston says that developing this self-confidence is particularly important for women, who may be "taking a back seat subconsciously."

"That's always my first advice," she says. "You have to go within yourself to find the strength and courage to believe you are a valuable attorney in the marketplace. You have to have the courage to realize you will be a leader, and see yourself in that role."