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## **Practice Groups Leaders' Roles in Business Development**

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One of the most important, but least understood roles of a group leader is how to successfully drive business development activity in their groups. This analysis requires us to ask two major questions: WHAT are the key roles, and HOW can leaders effectively implement those roles.

We receive excellent guidance on the "What" question by looking at the *2011 Altman Weil Practice Group Performance Survey* (a compilation of responses from 81 Managing Partners from firms of 50 or more lawyers). When asked what their firms were doing to improve group performance, the Managing Partners responded as follows:

**Practice Group Planning - 33.3%**

**Training / Coaching - 31.8%**

**Assessment / Accountability - 22.7%**

**Develop and Share Metrics - 21.2%**

**More Meetings / Communication - 18.2%**

**Reorganizing Group Structure - 15.2%**

This list, while instructive, tells only one part of the story. Since the devil is always in the details, leaders must understand and employ specific steps that will lead to success. The following are examples of best practices that have been employed by highly effective leaders in each of these six areas:

### **Practice Group Planning**

- Utilize external consultants to develop a plan.
- Group leader or a sub-group develops plans. (For greater buy-in, plans made by others can be presented to groups for their feedback and refinement.)
- Facilitated planning sessions for group members (partners only, all lawyers, etc.).
- Cross-selling planning sessions.

### **Training/Coaching**

- Business development training and coaching for partners, associates, and marketing staff.
- Client service training for all levels.
- Cross-selling training for partners.
- Leadership training and coaching for Group Leaders.

### **Assessment/Accountability**

- Internal task forces charged with tracking and measuring success in key areas (e.g. cross-selling initiatives).
- Appoint sub-leaders of groups who are “deputized” to manage and track activity.
- Utilize non-lawyer professional managers.
- Conduct client feedback and satisfaction surveys and track implementation and improvement.
- Align the compensation system to support desired behaviors.

### **Develop and Share Metrics**

- Devise the right “progress” measures designed to encourage and reward actions that will result in more billable hours, higher revenue, and greater profitability (e.g. on-site visits, client feedback received and implemented, internal cross-selling meetings conducted, hours devoted to leadership responsibilities, etc.).
- Measure and analyze key financial statistics to determine where to focus firm resources.

### **More Meetings/Communication**

- Encourage meetings between complementary practice groups.
- Encourage meetings between lawyers in different groups and offices.
- Encourage laterals to meet new firm lawyers.
- Scheduled social time among lawyers.
- Develop a lawyer capabilities database.
- Communicate cross-practice capabilities to targeted cross-selling prospects.
- Tout internal successes.
- Communicate situations where team-based behavior resulted in new work and was rewarded by the firm.

### **Reorganizing Group Structure**

- Devise groups based on serving client needs.
- Deputize sub-leaders to manage various aspects of running the group.
- Use non-lawyer staff to manage the bulk of internal administration.

Firms must work extremely hard to develop approaches that support an internal culture of business development. Those firms that understand what needs to be done, identify the steps to get there, and have the internal fortitude to consistently implement those steps will be rewarded with higher revenue, loyal clients, and greater profitability.

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