

Secrets of the Masters: The Business Development Guide for Lawyers

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by *David H. Freeman (Ark Group, 2013).*

Aristotle once said, “Whatever we learn to do, we learn by actually doing it; men come to be builders, for instance, by building, and harp players by playing the harp. In the same way, by doing just acts we come to be just; by doing self-controlled acts, we come to be self-controlled; and by doing brave acts, we become brave.” There are many lessons in this saying for lawyers who are hoping to become successful business developers. Learning to be a rainmaker takes practice — mostly trial and error. And, to boost the value of those teachings, the really successful rainmakers also learn from others who have failed, picked themselves up, tried again, and eventually succeeded.

That’s where David Freeman’s new book, *The Secrets of the Masters: The Business Development Guide for Lawyers*, comes into play. In addition to the incredibly valuable advice Freeman offers from his coaching of thousands of lawyers on business development, he has captured the wisdom of 27 other business development experts to provide lawyers with a head start on the trial and error of learning rainmaking.

The book starts off with the critical basics, including finding niches, developing a strategy, and identifying targets. It also covers many of the important details —how to

increase visibility, get and maximize meetings, use social media effectively, and obtain client feedback —that are necessary for business development success and sustainability. And, as an added bonus, there is an entire section devoted to maximizing business development as a lateral.

Unlike other business development books where the author tells the readers what to do, this book gives readers the tools to think through solutions for themselves. There are over 20 checklists, planning worksheets, and case studies to highlight and reinforce the teachings.

For those of you who are tasked with teaching or facilitating client service and business development skills at your organization, there are several very practical uses for this book. Three of those ideas are outlined here.

Self-Study. One option is to buy the book for each and every lawyer who wants to master the skill of developing business. S/he can then work independently through the book’s teachings and activities to focus on the areas of highest priority for that individual.

Small Group Book Clubs. A second option, which is likely to generate a more disciplined approach among the lawyers, is to create small book club groups. The participating lawyers are typically given homework (e.g., action planning worksheet, personal business plan) that is then shared with the group to stimulate discussion at the next session. Some firms organize these types of book clubs within a particular practice so the lawyers can relate rainmaking stories — successes and failures —to their own specific

area of law. Other firms invite lawyers from a range of complementary practices to work together on the book’s activities to drive cross-selling and interdepartmental collaboration.

A Comprehensive Training Curriculum.

Another option is to use the book as a “teacher’s guide” to plan and facilitate a full business development training curriculum. Each of the nine chapters, including the personal business plan template, can be used as a model for a series of interactive training workshops. Chapter One, for example, could be used to design and teach “Finding Your Niche and Developing Your Strategy for Business Development Success.” The session might start with a panel of up-and-coming rainmakers who are asked to briefly describe how they developed their niches and strategies over time. The workshop facilitator could then facilitate interactive, small group discussions that allow the lawyers in the training session to talk about their own approaches to niche and strategy development. Their homework —the action planning worksheet —could be the focus of the second session on the same topic as the lawyers share their draft plans and obtain real-time feedback from their peers and more experienced lawyers in the training.

Having led talent management efforts at top law firms for over two decades, I have experienced the trials and tribulations of teaching lawyers core skills such as business development. Many of them have mastered the technical aspects of being great lawyers. Writing briefs, taking depositions, and advising clients on deals are part of their daily routine. After all, most lawyers have had a decade or more of practice. But that’s the key —concentrated and dedicated practice. And that’s what it takes to be a rainmaker too. This book provides lawyers with the focus and discipline —in combination with the wisdom and tools offered by experts —needed to cultivate business development skills. ■

Secrets of the Masters is published by the U.K.-based Ark Group. It can also be ordered from other online vendors; at the time this review went to press, Amazon listed it for \$345.00.