

Supporting Diverse Attorneys: How Marketing Pros Can Become a Business Development Ally



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The path to partnership, which many attorneys aspire to achieve, can be a long and challenging road. In order to get there, an attorney's ability to generate new business is a critical component. The partnership track can be even more difficult for diverse attorneys, as this group tends to lag behind their counterparts in business development. It begs the question: Why do diverse attorneys face challenges in business development, and how can marketing and business development professionals better support their diverse attorneys?

During the Legal Marketing Association (LMA) Southwest Region Conference in September 2019, Tasneem Khokha and Holly Barocio from [GrowthPlay](#), presented on how we can better understand and counsel diverse attorneys, and examined the main challenges these attorneys face in building and sustaining their book of business.

Some of the key challenges Tasneem and Holly discussed, include:

- A lack of, or much smaller network of, potential business as compared to their counterparts.
- Feelings of being labeled as the token diverse attorney to add to a pitch.
- Feeling as though they lack a common ground with decision-makers because of different life experiences.
- Feeling pressure to have to work harder in order to "prove" themselves.

- Feeling uncomfortable asking for opportunities as compared to their counterparts.

So how can marketing and business development professionals help their attorneys navigate these concerns? It starts with listening and understanding. No one can make the experiences that diverse attorneys face disappear, but marketing professionals can help them turn these challenges into opportunities and set them up to handle future experiences with ease. It's important to remember the underlying characteristics of great business development, which are:

- Being an authentic relationship builder.
- Having the ability to provide solutions to problems, even if you aren't always rewarded for your efforts.
- Avoiding pitfalls, such as rushing to sell too soon.

While some diverse attorneys may inherently have a smaller network, if they are armed with the skill set to build authentic relationships and provide solutions to problems, they will be viewed as someone others can trust – a key characteristic of someone who can build a strong book of business. As a marketing and business development professional, being able to authentically counsel diverse attorneys is invaluable. Here are some techniques:

- Not having commonalities with decision-makers because of different life experiences is not a make or break situation. You can find commonalities in anything – love for sports? hobbies? pets? You'd be surprised the connections people can make if they listen and pay attention to the person they are talking to.
- From a poll of the audience, some diverse attorneys may feel that being the token diverse attorney is a negative and does not allow them to be recognized for their skills and experience. Be candid and acknowledge the elephant in the room, but advise them to take the ball and run with it. Encourage them to open up about whether they like the work or prefer to do something different, but they must seize the opportunity.
- Another common concern is that diverse attorneys are less inclined to ask for opportunities. For marketing professionals, be there to help connect the dots and nudge diverse attorneys to openly discuss what excites them and what they want more of. Diverse attorneys may feel siloed, but you can help connect them with others in the firm who can propel them further in their careers.

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