

Episode 11: Summary

Episode name: You™ - Building your personal brand

Guest(s): Araceli Robledo and Chris Gingell

What area(s) of law does this episode consider?

The episode discusses Business Development (BD) tips for lawyers who mainly work in private practice.

Why is this topic relevant?

BD applies to all lawyers as it underpins the healthy pipeline of work that will sustain their careers. Our guests tackle the myth that only senior practitioners need worry about BD, as right from their first days in practice, lawyers build relationships, connections and their own personal brand. It is these early actions that can shape their own practice and support the firms where they work. The episode also focuses on the strategies senior practitioners can implement to progress their own practice, including thought leadership initiatives, grappling with commerciality and learning from accountancy firms.

Our guests and BD experts, Chris Gingell and Araceli Robledo, who have a combined experience of over 35 years advising law firms in Australia and internationally on winning BD strategies give easy to follow tips on how lawyers can enhance their BD skills, no matter where they may be in their career.

What concepts are considered in this episode?

Business development for lawyers at different levels with different skill sets, branding for lawyers, building a pipeline of work, the benefits of a CRM system, the balance between legal knowledge and commerciality, the role of social media in business development

What are the main points?

- Broadly speaking, a lawyer's **personal brand** is their reputation, what they are known for. It begins to be established in the early years of lawyers' careers and evolves based on their work culture, behaviour and overall personality.
- The key to a healthy **pipeline** of work relies on 2 pillars: client relationship management (CRM) and commerciality. It also relies on lawyers investing time in both, not only meeting with clients but thinking about them and their business needs.
- **CRM** starts as early as law school, where the first connections in lawyers' careers are made. This ability to continuously make and maintain key professional relationships can definitely boost legal careers. Senior lawyers will use more sophisticated IT systems to help keep track of their contacts, whereas younger lawyers spend more time making those contacts, by attending industry events or establishing relationships with their counterparts at clients' teams.
- **Commerciality** forces lawyers to understand the commercial environment in which their clients' organisations operate, to see their legal advice as outcomes for their clients. As lawyers develop relationships, it is equally important they build their knowledge around a particular industry group(s). This makes their advice more relevant as they provide it within the context of the

client's sector.

- Law firms have much to learn from **accountancy firms** who lead the way in CRM and also commerciality.
- **Social media** is a useful platform for younger lawyers, to demonstrate their knowledge to the market, and senior practitioners, who use it to spread their thought-leadership expertise.
- Whilst a lawyer's personal brand begins early on in their career, they have a lot of autonomy in building it in a particular way, cementing their successes long into the future.
- Providing legal advice is still a people-to-people business, so keeping things natural, genuine and honest makes for long-lasting professional relationships.
- As lawyers build relationships throughout their careers, they should also build on knowledge of specific industries, so they can better advise clients within the context in which their business operates.
- The best way to learn about clients' businesses is to make time to see them and ask them directly.
- Younger lawyers can take BD in their own hands by asking for introductions at their level at client organisations, attending industry events, nurturing key relationships from law school or their grad cohort and putting their own expertise out there by way of social media.
- Making time for BD is of utmost importance, as these initiatives will help lawyers' future work come to them.
- Approaching BD like accountancy firms can get law firms ahead of the game.

What are the practical takeaways?