

Aug 30 2012 **Guest Blog: Business Development 101**

Guest Blog

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By Marilynn Deane Mendell

Sometimes you just have to state the obvious: be honest, plan, look your best, and say thank you. These are the universal tenets that produce exceptional business development practices. Every day 24/7/365. No vacations. No get out of jail free cards. Assuming that a company comes to the table with outstanding qualifications from a technical and expertise standpoint, then to gain new clients and market share a plan has to exist, proper decorum must be adhered to, appreciation has to be shown, and a courageous person must exist to carry through with ethical tenacity.



Kant believed that no one should ever lie and that the entire function of the planet depends on people telling the truth. Business strictly relies on trust. Grey areas cause doubt that will lead to mistrust. Send a developer a proposal and take credit for someone else's work, or imply by omission, just once, get caught, and trust will be permanently lost.

Therefore, high integrity overarches everything. Which action comes first? Can business development be done well if a person is only honest? No such thing. All of the principles support a successful effort. Four legged stools with one broken leg fall over. Fairly simple rules to abide by. Successful business development doesn't require a genius, a beauty queen, or a millionaire. The best in business depend on good old American values, hard work, and persistence. It helps to be the kind of person who naturally recognizes patterns, trends, and details, along with someone who just loves to learn for the sake of pure enjoyment.

The four basic principles appear easy. The trick is to practice them regularly, with intention, while attempting to improve. Research shows that practicing discrete steps until they become habits can literally transform a person. Business development is as much about psychology as it is about strategic plans and budgets. Understanding people with the subtext of how business operates remains the proverbial foundation to any successful business development leader.

People want to work beside those they can count on. Develop a reputation as the go to/will do/out do person on any team. Become the leader of a committee or chair an event, then put muscle into it. Clients like to watch from a safe distance. Pull off a seemingly unimportant charitable event and often a new client will appear afterwards. Make a statement in a new market sector by getting on the finance committee of a charity that needs support and is associated with a market sector's peer group. Choose the most difficult role and find a mentor who has done it all before. People like to help each other and asking for assistance gives someone a chance to fulfill that need. Good ethical behavior also means really listening to someone without background mind chatter while maintaining direct eye contact. Show a person undivided attention. People easily detect unfocused listening, fake smiles, and disingenuous behavior—even on the phone. Make business development calls on happy days and be sure to smile. Be kind and polite to every volunteer, waitress, and garage attendant. Honesty, truth telling, and integrity usually have their roots in small almost imperceptible places. Operating with stellar integrity opens more doors than attending events and handing out business cards. An impeccable reputation is the culmination of a person's entire character just like a mushroom on top of the surface is the fruit of an intricate network of tiny threads underground.

Most people like getting paid which ends up being a larger issue and another way clients judge whether to do business with a company. Gossip spreads fast when it comes to finance. Prospective clients want partners who manage budgets well, who pay on time, and who never cheat. Play fair and treat others better than they expect. It will amaze clients.

Finally, the best business development people live within their means so that they can always be in a position to walk away from a situation that's not on the up and up. Ultimately it takes a strong courageous character to take calculated risks while always acting with the utmost ethical behavior. A reputation for honesty will always reap great results.

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