

# START MARKETING ON DAY ONE: WHAT ASSOCIATES NEED TO KNOW

*KLA MARKETING ASSOCIATES*

Graduating law students have completed their rigorous training, taken and passed the bar exam, and begun their first “real” job as a new associate attorney. Now is the time to begin developing key behaviors and ways of thinking which will prove essential to their success as a lawyer. Key areas are in business development and marketing. Starting on day one, new lawyers can sow rich seeds for their professional futures.

Practicing law in a highly competitive, quickly changing, and 24/7 global economy, lawyers no longer have the luxury of simply being a smart and skilled legal practitioner. Lawyers who genuinely desire to succeed recognize this reality and are prepared to take bold steps early in their careers to learn how to become self sustaining in their practices and develop their own clients.

Below are 12 initiatives new lawyers may take to jumpstart building a client roster:

1. **Cultivate a helpful spirit, or service attitude.** That is, genuinely having the desire to help others whether or not it will benefit you directly. When interacting with others, turn on your radar for ways to help in some small, meaningful way; this mindset will help you learn what it means to be of (client) service. Developing this positive behavior will go a long way in nurturing long-lasting relationships. It takes a conscious effort on your part to create this new discipline.
2. **Develop a “marketing mindset”** in all aspects of your life, everyday. Adjoining a service attitude, developing a marketing mindset involves proactively looking for ways to increase your visibility among “target audiences”, build your credibility and reputation, and incorporate various marketing activities into your routine. Instead of thinking you must take off your lawyer hat to put on your marketing hat, combine them into one. Invite a former law school classmate who just started at a firm across town to a ballgame, an art exhibit, or some other activity you enjoy. While you root for your team, learn about your friend’s firm and the areas of law she handles.

The more you train yourself to think strategically about everyday activities as prospective business development opportunities, the more you will create those opportunities. It often starts with the “giving to get” service attitude.

3. **Get and stay connected.** Starting with law school classmates, find software to help you organize and build a contact list. It is critical to your success to foster these contacts. Presumably, your schoolmates are now employed in private practice, in government positions, in corporate in-house counsel positions, or even non-profit positions.

Maintaining an ongoing relationship provides the opportunity to not only nurture longstanding relationships but also for prospective business development opportunities when your friend’s firm/company is unable to handle a matter, for whatever reason.

Include former clerkship colleagues (including the judges), internship, friends and family, law professors, client contacts with whom you regularly work, and anyone else with whom you should maintain contact.

4. Craft a “**30-second commercial or elevator pitch**” of who you are and precisely what you do. Consider the “commercial” as a way to quickly and succinctly communicate your personal

brand. Avoid stating “I’m a xx lawyer”. That is your job title, not who you are in totality. Start with “My name is x and I help x”. If you practice delivering your commercial frequently, you’ll be surprised at how natural it will become.

5. **Develop New Relationships.** Take advantage of every opportunity to meet new people. Make a point of having lunch with a colleague in another practice area (including partners) once a week. Volunteer to help out wherever your talents and skills would be best suited. Possibilities include speaking with summer associates or researching and writing articles for a firm newsletter.

Focusing externally, become active in an organization. Often, chambers of commerce have young professional programs for those just starting out. Local bar associations have young law divisions for that same purpose. Check these out and develop friendships. It will help take the edge off much of the uncertainty and stress of being a new lawyer.

6. **Create and maintain a professional biographical profile.** A biographical profile is used to describe your credentials and legal focus. Profiles are used on law firm websites, in promotional materials, in proposal packages, and are a useful way to provide a sense of how you are building your career. While it may be early to actually declare a law concentration, it is useful to at least identify a general area of law in which you are interested (i.e. general litigation or commercial real estate). It can always change as you move forward.

It is important to update the profile (in print as well as online) often as you develop experience and become more active in business development activities such as publishing articles, presenting educational seminars, or becoming active in business, trade or legal groups.

7. **Leverage the Web** to help build your reputation and develop new relationships. Start with joining your alumni or local bar association listserv, creating a LinkedIn profile and actively seek connections, and contributing to or starting a blog. One word of advice: whatever online option you choose, follow through and maintain involvement or switch altogether.
8. **Find a mentor.** A key to your long-term success is developing mentoring relationships. Aside from law school, some lessons are best learned by those who have “been there, done that”. It can be very mutually rewarding to learn from another’s insights, experience, and stories. Proactively seek out these relationships.
9. **Become involved in the firm.** Attend firm events to acclimate into a new firm and become acquainted with colleagues. Partners delight in observing young lawyers getting involved to carve out their “place” within a firm. Show interest by helping out on a committee such as with the summer program or hiring committee. Work to become a “face” of your firm. This commitment will reap rewards down the road.
10. **Learn Effective Networking Skills.** If practices are built on leveraging connections, networking is where the connections are made. Do not underestimate how essential networking is to your success. Seek out training to develop your networking skills. Seriously, it is not just a matter of showing up at a business function and handing out your cards. There are tried and tested methods that are crucial you learn.
11. **Organizational Involvement.** An efficient reputation-building activity is to become involved in a business or trade group. It is here that you will meet and get to know business professionals

who have similar interests as you and may be in decision-making positions. Scope out the organization and get involved.

12. **Develop important “soft” skills.** Lawyers make or break their careers on the ability to be sophisticated and effective communicators. Developing superior writing and listening skills will help make persuasive and compelling arguments. The best business developers focus on what their audience is saying, paying attention to tone, speed of delivery, word choice and non-verbal communication cues.