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SUSAN SALTONSTALL DUNCAN ■ TIPS & TACTICS FOR NEW LAWYERS

Nurture Your Networks

Everyone has a network of family, friends, acquaintances and others from their personal, civic, religious, political and professional circles. Effective networking requires that you identify and broaden those formal and informal contacts, proactively seeking to strengthen existing relationships and targeting those whom you would like to add to your contact base.

Build your contact base. Nearly everyone with whom you come in contact could, over time, have value to you professionally or personally. Compile a list of all possible sources of referral and collaboration. Your list could include other lawyers, fellow alumni, summer associates, professors, judges, relatives, your spouse's or partner's friends, and other referral sources such as accountants, bankers, real estate agents, consultants and government representatives.

Explore mutual interests. Once you've developed your list, focus on building more meaningful relationships with a few people at a time. Explore areas of mutual interest and opportunity. Meet in person, or communicate by phone and e-mail. Send leads or articles of interest. The more you demonstrate your willingness to help others achieve their goals, the more likely they will think of opportunities to do the same for you. You can also network with these individuals at business, civic and charitable events in which you share a

mutual interest.

Develop a peer support group. Identify lawyers in your contact pool with whom you can exchange ideas, referrals and questions about career or business development topics. Or, you might build an e-mail group of peers in different professions who are targeting a similar group or category of prospective clients.

Leave the office. In the grind of meeting deadlines, it's too easy to spend most lunch hours at your desk. Commit to going out to lunch at least once per week with a marketing buddy, referral source or colleague at a competing firm. Once or twice a month, attend a local business chamber meeting, trade association function or civic, charitable or political event. You can't maintain a sense of "context" for your practice—or nurture meaningful external relationships—until you reach out and spend time with people outside of the office.

Give unto others. To network effectively, you must stimulate interaction. But, you must also provide contacts with appropriate introductions and reminders to network with each other. Maintaining mutually rewarding relationships requires that you give as well as receive ongoing benefits. ■



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Checklist

How-Tos for Better Networking

- Decide where and how you will network. Research upcoming events and meetings, learn whether your contacts or targets plan to attend, and put those events on your calendar.
- Prepare a memorable introduction, a 10-second "elevator speech." Focus not on what you want to sell but, instead, on what benefits and distinctive assets you can offer to clients and colleagues.
- Follow up with important contacts within 48 hours, preferably with a handwritten note. Alternatively, use e-mail or the telephone. Provide promised leads, information or introductions, or schedule a follow-up meeting.
- Strive to call, e-mail or send an article to one to two contacts per day, or four to six per week. Keep a record of your efforts to correspond with each contact.
- Networking is the process wherein you and those with whom you network give and receive value and information. Selling is the process of matching your services with prospects' needs and trying to secure their business. Do not confuse the two and engage in selling when you should be networking!