



Keys to Growing Your Practice

By Joey Asher, Esq.

Put a Dumpster in the Driveway

If you want to be a great business developer, you might take a lesson from Mark, the contractor who renovated my house last summer. We selected Mark for our major renovation project even though he came in with the highest bid.

We picked him, in part, because he put a huge blue construction-waste dumpster in our driveway before we'd even decided which contractor to hire. He didn't ask our permission. We came home one day and there it was beside the garage. We were stunned.

"I know that you want to move quickly and have everything done by the end of the summer," he reminded us when we called him. "The winning contractor will need to be ready to go the minute you decide which of us to hire. If you pick someone else, we'll take away the dumpster at our expense."

Mark committed resources to helping his client achieve their goal

of getting the project done on a tight deadline, even before he had the client. Like many good business developers, Mark was betting that his *commitment* would impress the prospect. He bet right.

The "dumpster in the driveway" is a great business development tactic because it demonstrates that you are ready and able to make a commitment to help the client achieve a goal or solve a problem.

Commit resources

Say you've met with a technology company about evaluating a potential business acquisition. Perhaps a management consultant has prepared a 50-page memorandum for the tech company detailing the goals and challenges associated with the acquisition. How can you put a dumpster in the prospect's driveway? You could commit resources to helping the company achieve its goals, even before it has selected you. You could spend several hours outlining a memo addressing your ideas for achieving the goals and overcoming the challenges outlined in the consultant's memo.

Your cover letter to the prospect could say, "The enclosed memorandum offers suggestions on how to address some of the challenges associated with your proposed acquisition. We offer this at no charge. We would love to hear

whether you think our work is useful and valuable to you."

Anything that shows you're ready, willing, and committed to solving the prospect's business problems qualifies as a "dumpster." Here are some more examples:

Offer to present a free seminar on a specific or pressing accounting issue, customized to the prospective client's business, on their premises.

Offer a free, customized analysis of a new regulation affecting the prospect's industry.

Suggest ways they can introduce prospective clients to *their* prospects.

Introduce prospects to key players in their industry. For example, you might connect a pharmaceutical executive with someone in the FDA or a congressional subcommittee.

Accounting firms have plenty of opportunities to impress their clients with "dumpsters." When I was practicing law, one of the major accounting firms called on one of my firm's biggest clients with a proprietary, detailed analysis of how they saw the future of the energy business. It was a great business development tactic. Why? Because they showed they understood the client's business and offered value. My client appreciated the firm's analysis. And while it did not immediately result in new business for the accounting firm, it did help build a



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strong business relationship.

Such actions increase your chances of winning the client. Heck, you've already begun helping them achieve their goal, solving their problem, showing you understand the client's business and adding

value. The client can't help but be impressed.

And don't make the mistake of thinking, "We shouldn't offer free business advice." Why not? Ice cream shops sell tons of ice cream cones by offering free tastes.

One of the clichés of business development is that "it's all about relationships." Relationships are indeed important. But merely knowing people won't get you the business. You have to show the prospect that you understand their business and are willing and able to make a commitment to them. Nothing does that better than placing a dumpster in the client's driveway. **VE**

Additional Resources

Books

- *The Marketing Game: How the World's Best Companies Play to Win*, by Eric Shulz, Adams Media, 1999 (ISBN 1-58062-479-0)
- *The Expert Witness Marketing Book*, by Rosalie Hamilton, Expert Communications, 2003 (available through NACVA)

Articles

- "Valuation Marketing: Just the Facts, Ma'am!" by Marvin T. Brown, *The Value Examiner*, Mar/Apr 2004
- "Marketing Litigation Services," by Scott A. Barnes, *National Litigation Consultants' Review*, June 1, 2003

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