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3 Places To Schmooze And Win Business

By **Kelly Knaub**

Law360, New York (July 7, 2015, 5:01 PM ET) -- Lawyers aren't just meeting and schmoozing with clients at the golf course these days. Instead, they're relying on their own interests to network organically and win business.

While networking at family activities or other social events can be successful, most business development coaches recommend that attorneys get involved in something they have a passion for and their clients or prospects share, legal industry consultant Peter Zeughauser told Law360. Lawyers shouldn't just get involved in something to develop business — they should do it because it's something they enjoy, he said.

"I think for a long time attorneys have used many other social activities to develop relationships and get business," Zeughauser said. "Golf is just a big part of the old boys' club."

Meals, wine events, professional sports games and concerts ranging from opera to rock 'n' roll are just some of the places attorneys are networking today to develop their client base, according to Zeughauser.

Here, we look at three places attorneys are heading to sign clients and make big bucks for their firms.

Turning Family Time Into Networking Time

Some attorneys with families also network at child-oriented events — such as soccer games or peewee football — Zeughauser said. He said a lot of business is done through the mutual interests of the children of both attorneys and clients.

Dyan Finguerra-DuCharme, a partner in Pryor Cashman LLP's intellectual property, litigation, and media and entertainment groups, said the relationship with one of her clients began about seven or eight years ago with both of their daughters, who happened to play sports together.

As a "soccer mom," she said she would hang out with another woman and her husband at games and that the woman grew to like her. Later, she saw Finguerra-DuCharme speak at the annual convention for the IP group International Trademark Association and approached her afterwards, telling Finguerra-DuCharme that she agreed with everything she said and that she wanted to start sending her business.

Developing clients is ultimately about developing relationships, Finguerra-DuCharme said, adding that it's important for the client to like and respect you.

"She already knew me and liked me and respected me, and then when she heard me

speak professionally, it just sort of clicked," Finguerra-DuCharme said.

The Win-Win Strategy of Sports

For some attorneys, passion can be channeled in the form of extreme sports, such as adventure races, which Brian Kaveney — an equity partner and founder of the industrial security practice at Armstrong Teasdale LLP and a former U.S. Marine Corps infantry officer — has participated in with clients.

Two weeks before one such race — which was 18 hours and included mountain biking, canoeing, running and orienteering — a client of Kaveney's who was on his four-member race team faced a significant legal issue. Rather than canceling the race, they decided to go forward and had 18 hours to talk about what the significant legal problem was, Kaveney said.

Ultimately, the experience changed the attorney-client relationship, according to Kaveney.

"Having that experience together changed the professional relationship because there was a significant, heightened level of trust and communication after navigating in the wilderness together for 18 hours," Kaveney said. "I don't think that ever would have happened on the golf course."

Kaveney has participated with existing clients, including those in the industrial security field, in endurance events such as triathlons and mud runs for charities like the USO, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting military troops, and U.S. Vets, an entity that helps homeless veterans. He said he's found that doing those activities together really strengthens the trust level between himself and the client.

Kaveney and his client knew going into that 18-hour race that they were on the same team, he said, adding that there's a lot of preparation that goes into the race.

"Details are important. For instance, if you forget a key piece of gear, like your headlamp, you will not be able to mountain bike as a team in the woods at night," Kaveney said. "We brought that same kind of discipline, contingency planning, and attention to detail to our legal and business issues."

Finguerra-DuCharme said she has one client who goes on an annual run together with her at a convention for the IP group International Trademark Association, explaining that she's able to maintain her relationship with this client who had moved away to a new place through this annual activity.

The Tried and True

Bar associations are also an incredible place to meet people who do the same kind of work, Finguerra-DuCharme added, saying that taking advantage of bar association networking events is something that's really helped her develop her business.

It has taken her "seven years of a slow boil" in developing a relationship with some of her clients, she noted, adding that she looks at developing business as "playing the long game as opposed to playing the short game."

"You're not going to have the business by the end of the third hole, but you may have it for the post-golf round drink afterwards," she said.

Ultimately, it's best not to rush the relationship and to pursue it in a subtle manner, according to Finguerra-DuCharme, who stressed thinking of client development like a long-term relationship.

"It's good to always be thinking about client development, but I wouldn't be overly aggressive about pursuing it," she said.

--Editing by John Quinn and Edrienne Su.

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