

## Getting invited to bid

### Author Ann Lee Gibson

Most law firms find it difficult to make the connection between "getting clients to talk to us" and "going out and talking with clients."

One consultant with whom we work has used this analogy: suppose Mary Lou thought to herself, "I wish I could get married. How can I increase my chances of making that happen?"

Assuming Mary Lou already knows what kind of marriage partner she'd like to have (a big assumption!) below are ten approaches she could take toward meeting her goal - She could:

- Go to bars where singles mingle.
- Join a club that promotes something she's interested in so she can meet people with similar interests.
- Join a dating agency.
- Put a personals ad in the paper.
- Tell all her friends she wants to get married and ask them to introduce her to eligible singles.
- Hang out in Internet chat rooms where singles chat.
- (If this has been a problem for a long time), see a counsellor to learn why she's sabotaging her own marriage prospects and then adjusting her behaviour.
- Ask someone out on a date and see how it goes.
- Ask someone else out on a date and see how it goes.
- Ask someone else out on a date and see how it goes.
- The parallel for law firms is this: if you're looking for opportunities to compete for an organisation's business and you know which kinds of companies you'd like to work for (don't skip this step!) consider the following ten approaches. (Note, there are many more!)
- Hang out where buyers of legal services from those companies hang out. For example, industry conferences, legal task forces for industry trade associations, interest groups, etcetera.
- Become active in groups that focus on legal topics that you're expert/interested in and where buyers of your services might also hang out. Examples include those listed in 1, above, special interest groups, golf clubs, and where ever else those folks hang out.
- Register with online bidding services that your prospects are using or considering using. One thought online bidding is still much more about consumer law and one-off, low-risk matters at this point than about long-term relationships with corporations.

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- Place an ad in periodicals your prospects read that says: "the next time you're holding a competition to select XYZ lawyers, give us a chance to compete for your business -- that's what we do !" (Be very careful about the wording of such an ad.) Publish articles highlighting your expertise in publications that your prospective clients read such as legal publications for in-house counsel, industry trade association magazines, etcetera.
- Tell all your lawyer friends in private practice that you want them to tell you about any RFTs or opportunities they hear about/receive that involve areas of the law they don't practice in. Then call up that organisation and ask to receive a copy of the current and future RFTs.
- Join list servers or email discussion forums on legal and industry topics where your prospective clients might also be hanging out.
- If you fear you're just not an RFT-receipt or RFT-winning law firm because you've gotten feedback in the past about having failed to impress prospective clients, correct those problems or get some assistance to correct the problems.
- Pick an organisation you'd like to work for that you know needs the kind of legal representation you provide. Telephone or visit them or send that company a letter saying "the next time you have to decide which law firm to hire to represent you in XYZ areas of the law, please give us a chance to compete for your business -because XYZ is what we do!"
- Pick a SECOND organisation for which you'd like to work - one which needs the kind of legal representation you provide; then telephone or visit them or send that company a letter saying "the next time you have to decide which law firm to hire to represent you in XYZ areas of the law, please give us a chance to compete for your business - because XYZ is what we do."
- Pick a THIRD organisation for which you'd like to work - one which needs the kind of legal representation you provide; then telephone or visit them or send that company a letter saying "the next time you have to decide which law firm to hire to represent you in XYZ areas of the law, please give us a chance to compete for your business - because XYZ is what we do !"
- Or just skip the first seven items and go straight to the last one.
- And continue on from there ...
- Alternatively, you could stay home every night, wishing someone would knock on the door and ask you to marry them!
- And, after you've gotten on lots of RFT lists, figure out:
  - How to distinguish between RFTs you should respond to and which are a waste of your firm's time.
  - How to find out what clients really want and prefer (in addition to what they say in the RFT).
  - How to create a persuasive proposal and make the shortlist.
  - How to win at "beauty parades" and panel interviews.

**Julian Midwinter & Associates can put you in touch with Ann Lee Gibson.**