

Every attorney from associate to partner should have a personal business plan. At the partner level you might instinctively execute the elements of your business plan, having developed muscle memory through successful repetition that began in the early stages of your career. Associates should purposefully develop this discipline early on by investing the time to design a plan that will be used as a roadmap to get you to partnership level.

A personal business plan is essentially a written, strategic outline of your goals and how you plan to achieve them. Your plan can be highly detailed and address every minutiae, but at a minimum should contain some basic elements, such as,

- Identify your primary practice areas. Identify the specific types of services you are selling to your clients. Are there other areas that compliment what you are currently doing that should be considered and explored?
- Identify your client demographic. Is it small business owners, large business owners, farmers, large corporations, families in need of estate planning, high net worth individuals, other service businesses, etc.?
- Identify your top 10 existing clients for the past year. Are there opportunities to provide them with additional or new services (cross selling)?
- Identify your top 10 prospective clients. Who have you been courting or been thinking about approaching?
- Identify your top 10 referral sources. Who referred you a client last year? Who do you know in a complimentary business who might be able to refer clients to you?
- Identify the organizations that you belong to and participate with. Participation with these organizations is key to developing your profile and awareness in the community and expanding your list of potential clients and referral sources!
- Identify the events you should sponsor and attend. Try to attend events that will be attended by prospects that fit the demographic profile of your desired clients.
- Create a database of contact information for your clients, prospective clients, and referral sources. Set a specific goal to reach out and make personal contact with these people on a frequent basis.
- Develop an internet presence on LinkedIn and other platforms that might be frequented by your client demographic. Write articles and provide useful content to stay top of mind.
- Most importantly, set specific goals and timelines to frequently: make personal contact with existing clients, potential clients, referral sources, cultivate new contacts, write articles and blog posts, speak at industry and organization meetings, and attend community and civic activities.

These are just some of the many examples of elements for a personal business plan. Your elements will be unique to you and where it is that you want to go. A personal business plan is a roadmap where the roads are always under construction and the freeways are constantly changing. You will need to revisit your personal business plan frequently to adapt to changes in the economy, your marketplace and your clients. And possibly even where you want to be in the future.