

## From Relationships to Revenue: What Law Firms Can Learn from Saul Ewing's Business Development Leaders

The firms that succeed in business development don't just rely on a handful of rainmakers. Instead, they build systems, mindsets, and cultures that support relationship-driven growth at scale. To illustrate what this looks like in action, I sat down with three professionals who live and breathe it every day.

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As I finalize my upcoming book, currently titled *Relationships to Revenue: A Lawyer's Guide to Unlocking the Power of Your Network*, one truth keeps rising to the top: the firms that succeed in business development don't just rely on a handful of rainmakers. Instead, they build systems, mindsets, and cultures that support relationship-driven growth at scale.

To illustrate what this looks like in action, I sat down with three professionals who live and breathe it every day: Kelly Breslin Enache, JD (Chief Strategic Operations Officer), Paul Malanowski (Director of Client Relations), and Shannon Lombardo (Director of Business Development), who lead Saul Ewing LLP's business development efforts.

Our conversation was candid, insightful, and rich with takeaways for anyone serious about making business development a consistent and strategic part of their practice. What emerged from our conversation was a powerful roadmap rooted in mindset shifts, institutional support, and a collective approach to client development.

### The Myth of the Lone Wolf Rainmaker

Too often, lawyers still view business development as a solitary pursuit or something reserved for extroverts or those who are "natural" at it. But as Shannon put it: "Our best rainmakers are our best role models, because they don't think of business development as a 'me' thing. They think of it as a culture they're responsible for growing. They ask themselves, 'How can we approach business development together, as a group or as a firm?'"

Kelly echoed this theme: "The lawyers who really stand out are the ones who focus not just on their own practice, but on building relationships on behalf of the whole firm. They factor in their colleagues. They look for ways to elevate others while strengthening their own network."

### From 'Hunting' to Helping

One of the most striking parts of the discussion was the rejection of the outdated "hunter" mindset. Paul didn't mince his words: "I find the phrase 'hunting in packs' deeply problematic. Frankly, I find it one of the most offensive ways to look at building relationships ... It suggests

domination or wearing someone down until they give in. That's not business development. That's just pressure."

Instead, the Saul Ewing team advocates for a more expansive, human approach. "It's about building a community — one that includes clients, colleagues, even people who may never hire us but help us think better," Paul said.

Kelly added: "It's not just about who's ready to buy now. Too many lawyers approach every interaction with, 'Do you need something? Do you need it now?' That's a short-sighted strategy that kills trust."

## Discipline Over Luck

Another myth that came under fire: the idea that business development success comes from big, flashy wins or serendipitous meetings with general counsel on airplanes.

"Everyone loves the one-in-a-million story," Shannon noted. "But that's not real life. Most BD wins are the result of small, consistent actions over time: calls, emails, remembering details, showing up."

Kelly agreed: "Inconsistency is the real killer. People lose touch for six months, then wonder why the relationship fizzled. BD isn't about one big thing. It's hundreds of small things done regularly over time."

## The Power of Perspective (and Vulnerability)

Our conversation also dug into why so many lawyers struggle to deepen their existing networks. It's not a lack of contacts; it's a lack of perspective.

"They have too narrow a view of who matters," Kelly said. "If someone isn't a direct decision-maker, they get dismissed. But that person could be a future GC, a referral source, or someone who elevates your credibility. You have to think more creatively and relationally."

Shannon emphasized the importance of active listening: "Lawyers are so focused on what they're going to say next that they miss what their contact is actually saying. That's not just ineffective. It's disrespectful. And it leads to missed opportunities to build trust."

Paul raised another under-discussed challenge: vulnerability. "Lawyers are wired to solve problems and project competence. But real relationships require vulnerability. If you're always peacocking, no one wants to talk to you. People connect when they see the human behind the title."

Shannon drove the point home with a powerful reminder: "The most effective rainmakers aren't just focusing on the wins. They normalize the 'no's. They stay consistent even when things don't pan out. That's how trust is built - over time, through realness."

This is one of the core principles behind *Relationships to Revenue*: business development isn't about proving you're the smartest person in the room. It's about showing up with curiosity, empathy, and generosity, while staying the course.

## Practical Tips for Lawyers Who Want to Improve Their BD Game

Beyond the strategic mindset shifts, our discussion yielded several practical, low-friction tactics any lawyer can adopt right now:

- **Put It on the Calendar:** BD activities need to be scheduled, not left to chance. Kelly offered this blunt truth: “If it’s not on your calendar, it won’t happen. You have to bake your BD strategy into your schedule. Otherwise, it gets steamrolled by urgent work.” Paul agreed, adding: “Your calendar should support your goals. Use it as an aid to your strategic planning, not just as a list of meetings.”
- **Don’t Keep It a Secret:** Shannon shared: “Come up with a plan and share it. Once it comes out of your mouth and is shared with others, you feel a sense of accountability.” In other words, keeping your goals private won’t help you reach them. Make them visible, and get support.
- **Include Colleagues in Your Strategy:** As Kelly put it, “Factor in your colleagues. Don’t just promote and sell your own services. Build relationships on behalf of the firm.”
- **Focus on Helping, Not Selling:** Paul recommended a simple but powerful mindset for every meeting: “When you go into every conversation with the mindset of ‘What can I learn that will help me help this person, personally or professionally?’, everything changes. That one shift affects your mindset, your worldview, and your impact.” That mindset makes you a trusted advisor, not just another name in your contact’s inbox.

## Final Thoughts

My biggest takeaway from this conversation? Saul Ewing isn’t successful at BD because they have a few great people. They’re successful because they’ve cultivated a mindset and a model that prioritizes consistency, generosity, and strategic collaboration.

In a world full of “random acts of networking,” they’ve chosen a different path, one that aligns perfectly with the thesis of my book: relationships are the most valuable (and most underleveraged) business asset lawyers have. But only if they’re nurtured with intention.