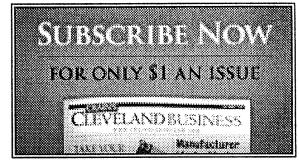




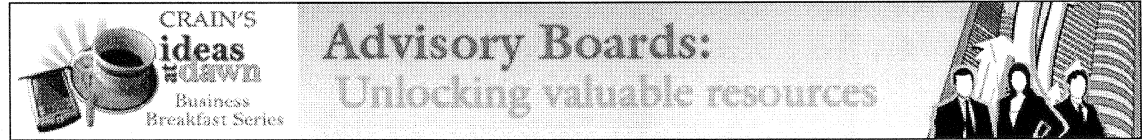
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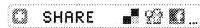
LEGAL AFFAIRS

Falling on hard times

Lawyers charged with bringing in business to their firms search for new ways to generate client leads

By [ARIELLE KASS](#)

4:30 am, October 19, 2009



Rainmaking lawyers — those who bring in big business for their firms — don't typically have to resort to Native American dances to get clients pouring in.

But with a profession that has been assailed in the troubled economy, many attorneys are doing some fancy footwork to ensure they keep business flowing.

“In a recession, it's harder to make rain, no question about it,” said Carolyn Buller, a Squire, Sanders & Dempsey partner and coordinator of the firm's worldwide industry groups. “I also think the business model is changing.”

Law firm partners often are expected to bring in their own business, called rainmaking, and usually get salary and status benefits based on how much business they snag. Traditionally, some attorneys are good at making rain, while others are less able to drum up new work from outside sources.

Ms. Buller, a transactional lawyer at the firm, said Squire Sanders, for one, is taking steps to help attorneys connect with clients — and bring in more business.

In addition to a fixed-fee arrangement that's attractive to clients that are cutting in-house lawyers, the firm has created industry groups in such specialties as maritime law, financial service law and education law. These are in addition to already



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established practice areas, such as those in intellectual property, real estate or litigation.

Ms. Buller said the industry groups help attract clients by showing that attorneys have a special interest in — and knowledge of — specific industries. Ms. Buller, for instance, is an expert in chemicals, and she often meets with firms she represents to discuss the field as a whole.

“It’s a way of adding value,” she said. “We talk to them about the industry.”

Grow where you're planted

At Hahn Loeser & Parks, litigation group co-chair Steve Goldfarb said he's able to keep making rain by developing more work for the clients he has. While many companies are cutting back on the number of outside law firms with which they work, he said the firms that those companies stay with often have the opportunity to pick up extra work.

It's more difficult to get his foot in the door to meet new clients, Mr. Goldfarb said, but being accessible to current clients and providing good work often will mean more opportunities through existing clients.

“More and more lawyers are chasing less and less work,” he said. “You need to be there when the problem arises; you need to solve the problem without them even asking. You need to be part of their team much more so these days. Things have changed.”

Mr. Goldfarb also said he has had luck finding business outside the region. “You can't keep coming home empty-handed from an empty fishing hole,” he said.

Cipriano Beredo, a partner at Squire Sanders, said there is a greater sense of urgency and a pressure on clients to do more with less, even as legal issues mount.

It's even more important, he said, to be good stewards of their time. A meeting should add value, he said, and attorneys should ask clients how they can be a better service provider.

Benesch managing partner Ira Kaplan said the environment is a challenging one, and clients always are looking for added value. His firm also offers an alternative fee structure, which is a major selling point in Benesch's strategic plan, he said.

He said lawyers still are expected to “be out there on the streets” — meaning that they remain visible and get their names out, even if they aren't immediately generating business — so the firm will remain top of mind when current or potential clients decide they need help.

“Our business lawyers, the ones that are successful, are much more often selling other areas of our practice,” he said. “The business guys are selling litigation services. Everyone's selling restructuring.”

Different times, same expectations

Squire Sanders has the same expectations of its rainmakers as always, Mr. Beredo said, and he and others are always searching for ways to develop business. Rick Rymond, a shareholder at Reminger Co. and vice president and secretary of the firm's management committee, said expectations for new business development haven't changed at that firm, either.

But Mr. Rymond said recently that many new clients have come from new attorneys who brought their books of business with them.

“We leave it to the attorneys to grow their business as they can,” he said. “Clearly, it's one of the considerations that impacts compensation.”

If a lawyer had been bringing in a lot of new business and suddenly stopped, that

attorney might be adversely affected, he said. But employees are able to make up for slower rainmaking by increasing billable hours.

Mr. Rymond said he doesn't think most firms have made changes to the way they make rain. Some firms, though, have said they're taking advantage of opportunities to provide more options to clients.

At Ulmer & Berne, managing partner Kip Reader said there is an increased focus on value, as business costs become more important. In addition to alternative fee arrangements, he said he is seeing more instances of teamwork in rainmaking and client service alike.

In general, he said, potential clients are more receptive than in the past to listening to possible alternatives. "The stress imposed by the economy has opened up some options," he said.

One's loss is another's gain

Other firms also said they are gaining opportunities due to clients' cost-consciousness. Paul Singerman, the president of Singerman, Mills, Desberg & Kauntz in Cleveland, said his attorneys are able to bring in new business because their costs are "considerably less" than those at other firms.

Mr. Singerman said he was "pleasantly surprised" by the way attorneys have been able to pick up business and stay busy.

Kerin Lyn Kaminski, a partner at Giffen & Kaminski, also said a less expensive cost structure was making rainmaking easy.

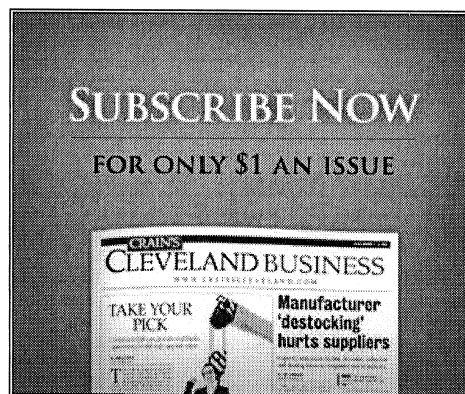
"It's been kind of a boom for us," she said. "We get a foot in the door because people are looking for alternatives in this market. The first thing they look for is good lawyers."

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