

## **Problem: Women lawyers have lower rates. Solution: Business Development**

**By Larry Bodine**, a business development trainer with a nationwide practice. He has helped 250+ law firms generate new revenue by devising strategies, conducting business development retreats and individually coaching attorneys. He can be reached at [www.LarryBodine.com](http://www.LarryBodine.com) and 630.942.0977.



Yes Virginia, there is a glass ceiling in the legal profession. The latest evidence that women are shortchanged in the law is found in the 2011 Billing Rates & Practices Survey published by ALM Legal Intelligence.

**Across the board, the average billing rates for women partners and associates are consistently lower than those of their male counterparts.** Because lawyers are compensated based on their billable revenue production, this means they are also paid less.

**There is a way for women lawyers to get out of the low-rate, low-pay trap: learn to become a business developer.** More about this in a minute.

The average billing rate for males is \$312 and for females it is \$259 at a national level, representing more than a 20 percent gap, according to the ALM survey. The highest average hourly rate is \$935 for males and \$625 for females.

Women are never going to achieve equality in the profession until their fees match the rates of male lawyers.

- Females have consistently lower average billing rates than males, across all firm sizes and titles (equity partner, associate, etc.)
- The top specialty areas with the highest average hourly billing rate for males include commercial/contract litigation (\$352), intellectual property non-litigation (\$341) and real estate non-litigation (\$333).
- Females have the highest average billing rate for intellectual property non-litigation (\$316), trusts/estates/probate non-litigation (\$287) and commercial/contract litigation (\$286).

**Rainmaking is the hammer to break the glass ceiling for women lawyers.**

“As a practical matter, rainmaking skills play a large part in the ability to advance and

Copies of the report can be purchased at [LawCatalog.com](http://LawCatalog.com). The survey focused on the billing practices of attorneys in small, midsize and large practices. Only U.S. law firms are included in this study. Sole practitioners were excluded from this report. A total of 176 firms provided usable standard hourly billing rate data for hourly billing rates for 10,913 lawyers, including 3,712 associates, 6,236 partners/shareholders (equity and nonequity), 608 active counsel and 357 staff lawyers. The standard hourly billing rate is defined as the most commonly assigned (standard) hourly rate.

succeed, especially in private practice,” said Christine Cartwright Baker, a rainmaker and partner for 15 years at Drinker, Biddle & Reath. She recently took the post of Vice President of Litigation for Realogy Corp. Legal Department in Parsippany, N.J. “More business development means that women are more likely to have a voice, be appointed to key internal committees.”

Law firms must begin to offer women lawyers support in business development. Marketing certainly isn’t taught in law school, to the fury of lawyers everywhere. Rainmakers are not *born*, they are *trained*. A recent survey I conducted revealed that 73% of rainmakers took a course or training session in marketing *after* they began their law practice (see <http://tinyurl.com/2q4tp8>).

Based on my years of experience training women lawyers to become rainmakers, following are several constructive ideas that law firms should adopt to reduce turnover among women lawyers, generate more business and thus boost firm revenue:

1. **Hire professional business development trainers to instruct women lawyers in getting new clients.** The same skills that make men successful can be employed by women lawyers.
2. **Underwrite the cost to send women lawyers to several business development training conferences**, such as those sometimes offered by the bar association and regularly offered by the Legal Marketing Association.
3. **Create a library of marketing and business development books in your firm’s marketing department.** Also, reimburse women lawyers for buying one of the many excellent books on rainmaking published by the American Bar Association. See <http://www.lawmarketing.biz/Store/> for an online collection of books, periodicals, video, multimedia and research.
4. **Fund a women’s’ business development initiative.** Ms. Baker started her own women lawyer’s networking group at her office. “It started off just meeting on a regular basis, just for lunch. We would talk about issues, but most importantly, ways that we could work together to develop business. Then, we started having networking events a couple times per year. We would invite women clients, potential clients and referral sources to our office for some sort of event. Once we had an expert on communication skills come in, and that was also popular. It gave us an opportunity to work together, to network among ourselves, and to network with clients and potential clients.”
5. **Assign a business development mentor to every woman lawyer.** This can be a male or female rainmaker whose mission is to demonstrate their business-building skills to their protégé.
6. **Always include a woman lawyer on a new-business call or response to an RFP.** Of course, the woman lawyer must have a speaking role and play a part in the resulting new work.
7. **Give women lawyers 200 hours a year of time to devote to business development**, which can be credited to their annual billable hour target.
8. **Provide women lawyers a complete list of trade associations in which the firm has a membership**, and all charities and non-profits where the firm has a

member on the Board. Underwrite the cost for women lawyers to become active in these organizations, where they will meet potential clients.

9. **Introduce women associates to executives at major clients**, so that the woman lawyer can cultivate relationships with junior executives at the client company.
10. **Underwrite the cost of public speaking training for women lawyers**, so that they can establish their credibility in front of an audience of clients. The firm's marketing team should seek out speaking engagements for the women lawyers.

“Women can do business development,” Ms. Baker said. “A lot of women are intimidated or overwhelmed because they picture business development as cold calls or sales pitches, and not too many of us are comfortable doing that, including men. But that’s not really the best way to develop business. On the contrary, the best rainmakers are people who are good at developing and nurturing relationships. That’s a skill that most women have and are innately good at, so that’s not something women need to learn.”

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