

It's a New Day, Relatively Speaking

By Kimberly Alford Rice

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As a law firm leader, you have read over and over about the value of educating your associates in business development skills to help them develop their own clients quicker, mitigate their overhead and become more valuable to the firm's bottom line. And, it is no secret that there is a significant gap between associates' law school education of all things theory-based and engaging in professional training on how to step-by-step develop a book of business and be profitable in a private practice.

In this tough competitive environment, however, how often does your management team seriously consider concrete ways to educate your associates on how to win new clients in the most productive ways possible?

Having worked with hundreds of lawyers over many years, we have encountered so few associates who are unwilling to learn new skill sets, develop professionally and make valuable contributions to secure their futures with their firms. And, those few who are a bit under-motivated, they don't last long for a host of reasons.

There are a multitude of ways to deliver business development skills training to your associates which will positively affect their productivity and professional development that it is almost irresponsible from a leadership perspective not to provide it.

Why, then, is there so little political will in some firms to provide these useful programs? One explanation we've heard repeatedly is that management recalls how they pulled themselves up by the bootstraps back "in the day" to figured out the business development puzzle themselves, and don't see the need to spend the firm's money to spoon feed their young lawyers. Think again, we advise.

In this post-recession era, it has never been more important for lawyers to be educated and adequately equipped for new business development — to contribute to the profitable growth of their firm, to become partners, and to have a more fulfilling practice.