

**“Women Lawyers Survey: Sales and Business Development Issues”**  
*The Difference Between Good and Great*

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The Legal Sales and Service Organization’s (LSSO) groundbreaking pilot survey examines the sales business development issues faced by women lawyers. This article reports what very successful women business generators do differently than moderately successful women. Our goals are to identify those differences and what law firm practices help or hinder business development.

LSSO’s survey had 418 women lawyer participants. This sample includes mostly (85%) full time attorneys working in firms ranging in size from very small to large global/national. Most (74%) are employed in global and/or national/regional firms. Slightly more respondents (53%) are equity and non-equity partners than senior and junior associates (47%). A broad range of practice areas is represented. Lastly, over half (55%) of married women have children.

An interesting bias is that the participants represent high business development achievers. With respect to 2004 business generation numbers, both groups’ averages seemed higher than we expected from a random sample. When we asked for an approximation of last year’s revenues, the very successful (VS) group (171) reported an average of \$543,778 and the moderately successful (MS) group (192) reported an average of \$133,528.

It is striking to look at the responses to questions that inquire whether the things these women are doing actually result in new business. VSs are:

- 1 Spending more time building their practice
- 1 Highly motivated
- 1 Planning their business development strategies
- 1 Completing/exceeding their goals
- 1 Engaging in a wider variety of activities
- 1 Proactive and highly skilled at relationship building
- 1 Asking for referrals
- 1 Receiving work from many sources
- 1 Active in leadership positions
- 1 Speaking and writing
- 1 Working in firms that are supporting their business development activities

<b>How many hours a month do you devote to business development?</b>	<b>VS%</b>	<b>MS%</b>
15 or more	33.2	6.7
11-14	19.5	10.3
6-10	27.8	20.6
5 or less	19.5	62.3

*The VS group devotes a great deal more time to their business development activities compared to the MS group and they engage in many activities required for business generation. VSs report*

*devoting 15 or more hours at a percent nearly 5x higher than the MSs and 11-14 hours at a percentage nearly 2x higher than MSs.*

<b>With respect to your sales and business development goals, which statement best describes your performance?</b>	<b>VS%</b>	<b>MS%</b>
Exceeds or fully meets their business development goals	41.0	12.1

*The VS group reports greater goal achievement in their business development activities compared to the MS group.*

*To meet prospects, VSs engage in more activities with both other attorneys and non-lawyers. They draw attention to themselves by taking leadership role in the nonprofit and other organizations that they join. Thus, they position themselves to meet people who can hire them or who can become a referral source. They also become known in their marketplace by frequently speaking and publishing more.*

*Compared to MSs, VSs are more active at internal marketing. They join client teams, take leadership positions, participate on committees, co-speak and are on pitch teams. They actively form relationships with their colleagues, are seen, get known and focus on business development activities with their peers.*

*To meet and form referral relationships, VSs compared to MSs, take a planned approach. They take leadership positions on boards and other organizations that they join. They network, speak, offer sponsorships and publish. These activities draw attention to them and provide personal and financial resources to referral sources.*

*Relationships are the key to building a very successful practice. VSs appear to be masters at relationship building. They freely and appropriately ask others for new work and to introduce them to people in a position to hire them. They ask clients, other lawyers and referral sources for introductions and/or new work.*

Firm support, support of colleagues and the use of teamwork are critical elements of success – it is more likely to exist for the very successful compared with firms where moderately successful women attorneys work. Since business development, like any other valued activity, takes a significant time commitment, firms should encourage this investment. It must also provide resources and support so that the investments are made wisely.

The VS group seems to intentionally plan their business development goals and activities and follow their plan to produce business. Accordingly, firms might supply attorneys with a simple planning form to use, for lawyers in a firm of any size will benefit from a planning process that includes goal setting.

<b>Support for business development from the law firms where women attorneys work</b>	<b>VS% Yes</b>	<b>MS% Yes</b>
My firm offers resources I need to improve my business development efforts	65.9	47.5

In my firm, colleagues support my business development efforts	70.7	48.0
I use teamwork in my business development efforts	71.2	52.3
Those who are good at business development have helped me acquire the necessary skills	39.5	17.5

*Compared with MSs, VSs seem to be in firms that support their business development efforts. They report receiving resources to improve their business development efforts, including support from other colleagues and from working in business development teams.*

For nearly all women in the study, gender is reported to negatively affect business development. Women are coping with internal and external strains that exist between family and work obligations. They cope with “hidden” and not-so-hidden barriers to business development that exist in their firms and in the marketplace. We will explore these areas in the future.

Regardless of size, all law firms have opportunities to give attorneys business planning forms, coaching support, sales training, and CRM/knowledge management and other technology to support business development efforts. Culture and compensation are important considerations. When women attorneys are supported as well as recognized and rewarded for their success, it seems to result in greater achievements.

Law firm leaders and management that are committed to supporting business development efforts must provide the appropriate structure, budget, and resources that facilitate the right kinds of business development activities. The findings in LSSO’s survey provide a roadmap to success for women lawyers and their firms.

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