



ATTORNEY SEARCH

*The Standard in Attorney  
Search and Placement*

## *Article of the Week from Harrison Barnes*

---

### ***Top 9 Ways for Any Attorney to Generate a Ton of Business***

When people are in law school, and even in their first few years out of law school, they believe that the most important components of a successful law firm career involve (1) billing a lot of hours (i.e., working hard) and (2) doing quality work. Very rapidly, however, young lawyers come to understand that just as important as doing first-rate work is their ability to generate business for the firm that they work in.

The purpose of this article is to examine the most important methods attorneys can use for generating business.

***In many respects, this may be one of the most important articles you ever read. Your success in generating clients and business will in large part determine your eventual success as an attorney.***

More important than your success as an attorney, however, will be your security as an attorney. Having a lot of business is essential to having security as an attorney because you will always have work to do. Moreover, having work to do will provide you the platform to hire others to work for you, to build your organization and to further your career. In my opinion, some of the greatest success (from a psychic and material aspect) you can have as an attorney comes from having a lot of work to do.

#### **1. Lawyers Who Want Business Need to Remember Every Person They Meet is Someone Who Will Potentially Be in a Position to Be a Future Client**

One of the largest mistakes attorneys (and even law students!) make is not realizing that every single person you ever meet is someone who is in or will be in a position to be your client. Many attorneys believe that they are often being “smart” sizing up people that they



meet and trying to assess whether they are people who could potentially be their client. They may assume, for example, that the janitor in their building could never be their client. They may assume that the person who sells them auto insurance could never be their client. They may assume that someone who was once their biggest enemy could never be their client.

How about if the janitor's son went to Harvard Law School, and he is now the General Counsel of a major publicly-traded computer software company in California? What if the auto insurance salesman is the 21-year old son of the CEO of a major American insurance company? What if your biggest enemy is now the owner of a major company that does work in the pre-IPO stage?

When I was practicing law, I received hundreds of thousands of dollars in business from one of these types of clients and heard stories about people getting business from similar situations. Each of these clients, if properly served, could have made the career of the attorney involved. Millions of dollars in fees could have been made. Never underestimate the people you meet.

Whatever you are doing and whomever you meet, you need to realize they represent potential business for you and/or your firm. It does not matter if you are at an ultra-expensive and prestigious law firm or if you are at a smaller law firm, or even if you are just practicing on your own. Every time you meet someone, they are a potential client. How you act towards others will also determine whether they are likely to be your client in the future. Take no one for granted.

### **A. Do not take any vendors you deal with for granted**

Your dry cleaner, the person who mows your lawn, the mechanic who fixes your car—whomever you can imagine is a potential source of business for you. Stay in touch with them and remember to always be nice.



## **B. Do not take your peers or subordinates for granted**

One of the best sources of future business for most attorneys is the people you worked with early in your career. This includes your peers in college, law school and your employers. Make sure you treat everyone you come into contact with as if they could be a future client. **See You Need to Be Connected With Others at Work.**

## **C. Do not take your relatives for granted**

Relatives can often be a great source of business. Relatives love to tell people you are a lawyer or even use you for legal work. Treat them well too.

## **D. Do not take your former employers for granted**

Your former employers (and all of the people within them) will move to other employers and potentially be in a position to give you business. Your former employers may also have cases and other work they do not want to do but which you can do. Whatever the case, you need to realize that your former employers are people who are in a position to give you a great deal of work. DO NOT burn bridges wherever you go and make sure your former employers are always your advocates. Your former employers will be in a position to give you work and talk about you to others who can also give you work.

## **E. Do not take your superiors for granted**

If you do a good enough job impressing your superiors, they can be a great source of future business for the same reasons your former employers can. Always go above and beyond the call of duty.

There is no one you should ever take for granted. Everyone you encounter is someone who is a good potential source of business and work for you in the future. Remember this, and treat the world and everyone you encounter, both inside and outside of work, as a good source of revenue.



## See the following articles for more information:

- **Harmonize With the People in Your Environment**
- **Being Nice Makes Good Business Sense**
- **The Importance of Being Well Liked in Your Job**
- **You Need to Be Connected With Others at Work**

## 2. Lawyers Who Want to Get Business Need to Talk about Their Work

About 20 years ago, I was in Charlottesville, Virginia, in a hotel ballroom watching an attorney from a very prestigious Southern law firm give a three-hour PowerPoint presentation entitled “Developments in Franchising Law”. Every local owner of a [Burger King](#), [McDonalds](#), Subway and other franchises had turned out for this bizarre event. I had been required to go to this for a class on franchising law I just happened to be taking.

I call the event bizarre because it was very funny. The speaker was a Southern gentleman in his mid-60s. He wore a bow tie and spoke for three hours about franchising law. He was so boring and his material was so dry and irrelevant to anything that I could scarcely believe I was still alive at the end of his presentation. The lawyer also seemed very bored by the subject matter he was delivering. In fact, there were several points where I had to hold myself back from laughing. Other members of my class reached a point where they were afraid to make eye contact with one another for fear they would also break into hysterics.

Incredibly, all of the local owners of the franchises who had been invited to this momentous event seemed to keep sitting up at attention the entire time and were the only ones (besides the law students) who made the effort to appear to really be interested in this. Over hor d’oeuvres at the break, I spoke with the owner of the local JaniClean franchise and another franchise owner and realized no one seemed to have any idea what this old lawyer was talking about. They all agreed, though, that he must really be an expert on the subject.



When the event ended, however, I watched as one audience member after another went up to the lawyer and told him they “enjoyed” his talk, asked him for a business card and told him they wanted to discuss one issue or another related to their particular franchise with him. The lawyer must have picked up 10+ clients that day. Right then and there, I realized that something very significant had occurred. Just because the lawyer had spoken so much about his work, everyone presumed he was good at what he did and was eager to hire him as their own attorney.

If you want to get business, you need to talk about your work. People need to see you as an expert and believe you are very good at what you do. People need to believe they can turn to you for advice about what they are doing and also need to believe that you are enthusiastic about what you are doing.

When you think about it, the people you want to go to for assistance and turn to when you need help are most likely to be the people who seem most excited about their work. You need to realize that sounding enthusiastic and being enthusiastic is likely to attract people to you. Writing articles is an example. Giving public talks is another example.

Talking about your work goes deeper than simply writing articles or giving talks, however. Talking about your work means getting enthusiastic about your work with everyone you encounter. Talk about your work with people in your office. Talk about your work with your clients. Just keep talking!

The reason talking about your work is so important is that people tend to remember those who show enthusiasm toward their work. This also goes for your peers. You want to be remembered by everyone you come into contact with as someone who enjoys their work.

Remember the example of the boring attorney I saw talk about franchising law a decade or more ago. Think about what would have happened with this attorney had he really been interesting! Here, he simply talked and got a lot of business. You need to speak to get business, too, and I urge you to speak a lot about what you do.



One of the most effective marketing lines I ever heard was “You can build a better mousetrap, but if the world does not know about it, they will beat a path right around your door.” People need to know you do what you do and they need to think you are enthusiastic about what you do. That is why restaurants and others put giant billboards on the highway, and some even put billboards saying things like, “Only 4 more exits until the best split pea soup in Ohio!!” Then, “Turn here for the best split pea soup in Ohio!!” People get enthusiastic about something as mundane as split pea soup because the restaurant talks about it! So too should you talk about your work.

**See the following articles for more information:**

- **Share What You Know**
- **Do Not Be Afraid to Broadcast Your Value**

### **3. Lawyers Who Want to Get Business Need to Set a Good Example**

Setting a good example means that you walk the walk and talk the talk of the sort of attorney others would want to be represented by. This is exceptionally important and others need to believe you are an attorney who could effectively represent them and would always look out for their best interest.

At the outset, I should note that I have the dual qualifications of being an attorney with business and being in a position where I am involved in hiring outside counsel for various companies. There are several issues clients are likely to be concerned about when hiring you.

One of the most important issues clients are likely to be concerned about is your perceived level of honesty. I know that I would never want to hire an attorney who seemed the least bit dishonest. The person that is billing you on an hourly basis should be someone that is telling the truth. **See: Can You Be Trusted.**



When I was practicing law, I knew of at least a couple of attorneys who made up their hours, including a high-ranking partner in a law firm I worked in (which will go unnamed). I remember an associate working all weekend and completing an assignment at 7:00 am after being up since Friday night, and then going to change and take a shower. When he returned a few hours later, he went into the office of a partner to discuss the assignment he had put on his chair that evening. The associate saw a timesheet that indicated the partner had assisted with the brief all weekend and was billing for 25 hours of time. The partner had not worked at all. Now from my standpoint, I am surely not likely to ever want to use this partner for any work.

The issue goes much deeper than this, however. If you are dishonest at all in your personal (or work life) in the least, then this will get out. You are always being tested, whether it is in the store when the clerk gives you change, or anywhere else. People want to deal with those who are honest. You want to be dealing with people who are honest as well. Your clients will ask people if you are honest, and they will give their “honest” opinion about you on most occasions.

Another example which comes to mind is the “partying” attorney who goes out with their clients for a wild substance-packed evening. No one wants an attorney who is out of control or does not handle themselves in a good way at all times. Clients want attorneys who are likely to do the best work possible and make clear decisions.

When you examine most organizations which are very successful and have been around for a long time, it is very easy to see that these organizations tend to look for “steady” people who are not particularly mercurial and seem very competent. This is something that is needed at all companies. Companies look for this because they need reliable people to run their businesses successfully.

You need to act and behave at all times as you would want your attorney to act and behave.



## **See the following articles for more information:**

- **The Real Reason There Are Fewer Attorney Jobs: What No One Wants You to Know**
- **The Importance of Sharing**

### **4. Lawyers Who Want to Get Business Need to Be Interested in Others and Their Legal Issues**

People want to be assisted by people they perceive as caring about their problems and issues. You need to be interested in the work you are doing. The more interested you are in the work you are doing, the better you are likely to do at this work.

If you are interested in the work you are doing, you will also have the tendency to seek out others and provide them advice. People will also be more receptive to your advice because they will realize you are interested in what you are doing and care about what you are talking about.

When you are interested in others and their legal issues, you will develop a mindset where you will do your best to speak with others when stuff comes up that you can assist with. You will also do your best to listen and take the time to understand what other peoples' problems are.

Understanding what other peoples' problems are is something very few attorneys are good at or even know how to do. When you take the time to listen and ensure that you understand where people are coming from, they will be grateful. In addition, when you take the time to understand what others' problems are, they will feel invested in you. When others feel invested in you, they want to work with you more closely.

Allow your clients (or potential clients) to speak at length. This is something that will pay huge dividends.





I remember a few years ago when I was speaking with a firm outside of the law (a branding firm) about doing some work for one of my companies. At that point, I had two bids and both were roughly the same price of \$250,000. The company that was my first choice was invited to come by my office and meet with me. I had several concerns I wanted to speak about. I never really got the opportunity to speak, though. What happened was the representative from this company spent all the time in our meeting speaking about what was important to him—the fact that they were a big company, the fact that they had done a lot of work for others in the past, the fact that they had good people working for them. He never gave me the opportunity to say a single thing about what was important to me. Due to this, I ended up not using the company.

When you think about it, the people who are most interesting to us, and who are the people we like the most, are the people who show the most interest in us. When you are interested in other people, you make them feel acknowledged and understood. Being interested in other people also makes them believe you are interesting (even if you are not!). Being interested in other people is crucial to being a good business generator.

A final point is that attorneys are there to serve others. The more you learn about your clients and potential clients, the better you will be able to potentially serve them. Learn everything you can about your clients and potential clients to serve them better. The more you know, the more you can assist them with (or offer your assistance with), and the more potential work and business you will have.

**See the following articles for more information:**

- **Be Interested in Others**
- **Love People Who Give You Work and Love Your Work**
- **Communicate Your Value to Get a Job and Keep it**
- **You Will Succeed in Your Job and Job Search When You Are Concerned with Giving and Not Taking**



- **Narcissistic Entitlement Syndrome**
- **Flow, Your Ego and Your Career**

## **5. Lawyers Who Want to Get Business Need to Get Out and Form Relationships**

If you do not start somewhere, you will be nowhere. In order to get business, as an attorney you need to get out and meet people and push your comfort zones. You need to learn how to break down the boundaries of formality and form relationships with people outside your immediate influence.

If you are a young associate, remember it will be very difficult to ever build a book of business (you still can, but it will be more difficult) if the only people you know are those you are meeting through work. You must get out and meet people outside of work. This means going to events where attorneys are likely to be present, but it also means going to events where you are likely to stand out because you are an attorney.

There are millions of potential social situations you can inject yourself into. It is important that you get involved in as many social situations outside of work as you possibly can. This networking will give you the ability to meet new people and connect. These people may have the ability to refer relationships to you, or they may not. If you do not start to form relationships, however, then you will not be someone who can get business in the first place. Get out and form relationships!

**See the following articles for more information:**

- **Take Small Actions and Meet Others**
- **Relationships, Commodities and Making Connections**
- **The Importance of Fitting In**



## 6. Lawyers Who Specialize Get More Business Than Those Who Do Not

You need to specialize. An attorney with a certain specialty is likely to get more work in the same specialty when it becomes available. People will simply refer clients to you.

There are many ways to specialize.

- If you specialize in litigation, that is a start.
- If you specialize in representing manufacturers of disposable lighters that are defective and injure people, that is probably even better.

As an attorney, you need to also put on your marketing hat. Being a good marketer means being seen and being easily found for one thing or another when people need your service. If you are good at what you do, and you are specialized, then people will find you.

There was a period around 1997 through the middle of 2000 when seemingly anyone with a decent idea could make some money on the Internet. This was called a period of Internet “land grabbing” and people were making great sums of money. Notwithstanding, during this same period of time, most people were “losing” great sums of money. What is interesting to examine, however, is the few people who actually were making money.

The few people who were making money were setting up small businesses on the Internet selling simple specialized products. They were selling bird cages, they were selling replacement batteries for cell phones, they were selling cases for Palm Pilots and other similar knick knacks. The reason people selling these things were making money in these early days of the Internet is due to the fact that they were the ones being found when there was a need for a particular product. Think about it: if you need a bird cage and searched for a person selling bird cages, you would want to use the person who appeared to be an expert in bird cages. In fact, this might be the only person you need.

If you need an attorney to help you with the regulations of franchise law, then you are



likely to use the one who appears to be an expert in franchising, especially if there is only one attorney in your area doing this.

The specialist usually gets the business. If you want to get work, then figure out how to make yourself and your practice seem as specialized as possible.

**See the following articles for more information:**

- **The Importance of Finding and Creating Demand**
- **Being New, Different and Representing Change**
- **Specialize, Be Seen and Associate with Greatness**

## **7. Attorneys Need to Be Familiar to Others to Get Business and Clients**

In order for people to do business with you and choose you as their attorney, you are going to need to be familiar—very familiar. This means phone calls on peoples' birthdays. This means frequent letter updates. This means forwarding articles of interest. This means going out of your way to let people know you are there.

It does not take a ton of effort to let people know you are there. In order to let people know you are there, it is important to make contact with them as much as possible.

When I was a young attorney, I was so eager to get clients and gain business that I sought out the motivational guru for attorneys looking to get business. His entire process involved having people write down the names of everyone they knew and making contact with them consistently. Through this method, it was believed that you could get lots of work. Making sure people know who you are is essential. Some years later, I read a book called *The Referral of a Lifetime* which has a similar system (this book is very good, and I recommend it highly. It will help you get clients).

If you are going to get business, you need to be familiar. Once you get clients, you also



need to stay and be familiar. Be familiar!

**See the following articles for more information:**

- **Are You Here? The Importance of Being Present in Your Job and Job Search**
- **Treating Your Career Like a Small Business**

## **8. Attorneys Who Want to Get Business Need to Study Marketing**

Read articles and books about marketing. Go to a marketing seminar. Pick topics that interest you. Get interested in this subject matter as much as you can.

I constantly recommend people study marketing in a way that suits them. Only read the stuff about marketing you are interested in. The more you study marketing, the better you will become. Every form of marketing can translate into the world of getting legal clients. If you read about copywriting, this may assist you with writing letters to get clients. Learn and study marketing. The effort you put into studying marketing is likely to pay far more than you put in.

**See the following articles for more information:**

- **Scientific Advertising by Claude Hopkins**
- **The Kick Ass Marketing Secret of the Most Successful Job Applicants and Employees**

## **9. Attorneys Who Get Business Don't Quit**

One big client (or several) can change your life and your entire practice of law. You need to implement a strategy where you are resilient and always looking for clients. Just because you do not think you are good at marketing does not mean you are not good at marketing. Some of the attorneys with the most business are the biggest nerds and/or



social misfits you will ever meet. Some of the attorneys with the most business are also the most introverted. In order to get business, however, you are going to need to do something because if you do not start somewhere, you will be nowhere. You are also going to need to not give up. Some relationships can take years to develop. If you try one strategy and it does not work, then try another.

**See the following articles for more information:**

- **Persist Until You Succeed**
- **Learn from Every Experience You Have Ever Had**
- **Do Not Allow the Past to Limit Your Opportunities Today**
- **One of the Most Significant Lessons I Personally Ever Learned About Work**

**Conclusions**

At its highest level, attorneys who are good business generators may hardly practice law at all. The proverbial retired senator or judge may be used more for their name recognition and business generating ability than their desire or ability to practice law.

I want to bring up a point that is pretty disturbing, and one I hope will change your life. When I first became a legal recruiter and became known as a very good one, I started getting an inordinate amount of calls and requests for meeting with partners of law firms who wanted to move. In order for a legal recruiter to place a partner, the partner generally needs to have enough business to sustain them (generally around 3-4 times their anticipated salary) and a long history of having a large amount of business. Therefore, a partner making \$300,000 a year will need to have \$1,000,000 in business in most cases. This is just the way it is.

A lot of the calls I received were from partners who had no or very little business. Most of these partners had children in school and had been practicing for 25+ years. In many



ATTORNEY SEARCH

*The Standard in Attorney  
Search and Placement*

cases, I saw partners in major AmLaw 100 law firms who were being paid less than first-year associates because they had no business. Their houses were unkempt and these partners had a very hard time. You would meet them and their lack of confidence and demoralization was apparent.

Every day, partners with no or very little business at law firms all over the United States are calling BCG Attorney Search looking for new jobs. Privately, [BCG Attorney Search recruiters](#) could tell each other the names of partners with no business at firms throughout the cities they practice in. In the majority of cases, these partners are eventually told they need to be out of the firm in six months to a year. The consequences can be dramatic and painful. Because I have seen the results of this, and it is so sad that it has affected me personally, I actually started numerous other companies besides BCG Attorney Search to help attorneys get jobs.

The point I want to make is that if you do not work hard to generate great amounts of business, you will be at the mercy of your firm for your entire career. They can pay you what they want to, and they can let you go if they want to. And when a firm lets a partner go with no business, the partner often has few options because most firms only want to hire partners with books of business. [Going in-house](#) is not always easy either.

You might as well know that the most important thing you can do as an attorney for your career is to develop a lot of business. Your life and happiness in your career will largely depend on this. If you do not do this, then you will eventually, somewhere down the road, find yourself in very serious trouble or simply exploited and at the mercy of your employer into your retirement.

***Get business. Follow the advice in this article about how to get business as an attorney and study my other articles referred to in this article. A successful career depends on this.***



ATTORNEY SEARCH

*The Standard in Attorney  
Search and Placement*

**See the following articles for more information:**

- **Top 10 Ways Attorneys Can Move to a Better Law Firm and Get a Better Attorney Job**
- **Positioning Yourself for Partnership**
- **The Importance of Portable Business**

**[Click here to contact Harrison](#)**

*Our mission is to meet or exceed every attorney's expectations for their job search and ensure they are succeeding and winning with BCG Attorney Search*