

## *Rainmaking Real Estate Associate with Entrepreneurial Spirit Joins a Team*

You cannot succeed at any business, including a legal business, without clients. Rainmaking is an essential skill that all law firms need. However, while rainmaking capability is valued in partners, it is not always valued in younger associates. Firms do not hire associates to bring in clients; they hire associates to service clients that partners bring in.

It can thus be challenging to help very entrepreneurial junior and mid-level candidates find a home in a firm. Attorneys who are already out there signing up clients - as this candidate was - do not necessarily see the benefit in joining a firm where they will not call the shots. This is especially the case when the attorney is operating a "solo" practice, as was the case here. But there is much to be gained by building up your skill set within an established institution, especially if you are still on the younger end of your career spectrum, even if it means sacrificing autonomy for the short-term, and spending less time networking and more time churning out deals for more senior attorneys.

I worked with this candidate for over a year. We began our work when he was at a regional West Coast firm handling real estate deals in a niche area. He did not have the strongest grades, but he had a solid work history with a solid firm and an impressive deal sheet. I always like to see deal sheets because they help me understand the nitty-gritty of the work my candidate has done. It takes time to put together a deal sheet and I appreciate it when someone puts in that effort. A detailed and robust deal sheet lets me know that an attorney cares about his or her career and takes pride of ownership of his or her profession.

This candidate liked his current firm and was doing well there. He had also gotten great experience. The problem was that his firm only worked on a certain type of real estate transaction and he wanted to do other kinds of real estate deals. There was no room to grow at that firm because the firm was never going to do that other kind of work, at least not in the foreseeable future.

We got some interest in his applications, but because he was trying to make a switch - even though it was from one specialty to another within the same practice area of real estate - we were not able to get an offer. We put his search on hold for several months and when I checked back in I learned that he had left his firm and gone "solo." Whether or not that was a wise move for a mid-level attorney to make, he was succeeding at it. He was bringing in clients and making over \$100,000 a year at it! Still, the idea of a firm continued to interest him and he was open to resuming the search, so we continued. I respected that he was able to support himself practicing law on his own, and was brave enough to try, but I was concerned that if he did not learn other skills by more experienced practitioners who worked on bigger deals that his solo career would reach a ceiling and this would impede his potential in the long-run.

From a legal placement perspective, things were even more difficult now, because he had left his firm and started his own firm, which is something firms are very wary of. This is because they feel that once you have left the firm life you will not be motivated to return to it. But I had come to really like this candidate, including his gumption, and I wanted to help him.

It was a good thing we did not give up, because this time around we were successful. We found a firm that saw his value, as reflected in the substance of the work he had produced at his prior firm before he left as well as his ability to get out into the world and sign up clients. There was no guarantee that he would be able to keep all of his clients - but the firm agreed to review them and try to keep the ones that worked with the firm's practice. My candidate realized that he had a whole career ahead of him, and there was lots of rainmaking in his future, and that he would be even more valuable to his clients and as a member of the

profession if he joined a team and built up his skills by continuing to work on sophisticated real estate deals in a firm environment. It took a while to get this attorney and the firm on the "same page" but in the end the attorney accepted the position. Sometimes you can go further with the support of a team behind you!