

# Business Development for Law Firms: A Checklist

**It's time, 2020, to develop new strategies for winning new business and retaining existing clients.**

## Why?

Simply put, the two “must-have” goals, [to grow any Law Firm](#) are acquisition and retention. With most firms struggling to win new business and an increasing number of clients looking elsewhere, current retention and acquisition strategies aren't enough.

To give you some food for thought and actionable advice, Law Firm Growth expert, Gary Mitchell and Operations Advisor, Lisa Dawson, have created a checklist that can help your firm have a record year. Click on an item in the checklist to learn more.

## A. How to Differentiate Your Law Firm and Win New Business

- [1. Build a Brand](#)
- [2. Engage Clients Before They Sign On](#)
- [3. Nurture Client Relationships](#)
- [4. Develop Deeper Relationships with New Service Offerings](#)
- [5. Personalize Client Engagements](#)
- [6. Pursue Innovation](#)
- [7. Adopt Technologies which have been identified out of need](#)
- [8. Get Data Smart](#)
- [9. Skill Up](#)
- [10. Tap into New Social Networks](#)
- [11. Succession Planning](#)

## B. How to Retain Current Clients

- [1. Make Room for More Profitable Clients](#)
- [2. Consider Your Role as a Client Advisor](#)
- [3. Use Values and Community Connection](#)
- [4. Boost your service value](#)

## [Trends into 2020](#)

# How to Differentiate Your Law Firm

## 1. Build a Brand

Canada has over 125,000 lawyers and over 12,000 in BC. They are all experts at what they do, so the question becomes: What sets one apart from another?

[Branding](#) is a visual and conceptual way to get a firm recognized and remembered, ideally by helping clients and prospects perceive the company in a favourable way.

While many elements contribute to a brand ,including the company name, logo, slogan, and design, the main focus is encouraging people to view the company as the right and best choice in the market.

Branding is what gives clients a reason to choose one firm over another by conveying what is special about the firm. Credentials are "see through" in legal industry competition. It is the emotional connection and/or response which cinches the relationship.

## 2. Engage Clients Before They Sign On

[Business development](#) professionals can and should take steps to advance the brand with each interaction — even before working with a client. Keep in mind that the experience with the brand is often what determines the client's perception. It's essential to focus on making that experience as enjoyable and valuable as possible.

### **4 ways to create a great pre-engagement experience:**

- a. Automate appointment scheduling by taking advantage of technology
- b. Add website options that put more control and resources in the hands of clients.
- c. Prepare your client for the interaction, such as by sending an email reminder with a photo of the assigned lawyer.
- d. Invite your new client to a free information or reception event.

## 3. Nurture Client Relationships

After you've won the business, the real work begins. How do you maintain the relationship even after the file is closed? To encourage return business and loyalty, lawyers must continue nurturing those client relationships.

Consider sending a box of chocolates before final closure of a deal; a bottle of champagne after a successful deal; and ensure clients sign up for your Blog or E-Newsletter.

#### **4. Develop Deeper Relationships with New Service Offerings**

We all know it is far more cost effective to keep a client than to acquire a new one.

Ensure your Firm's varied practice groups are cross-serving to clients. Heighten the awareness of aligned practice areas (example: Family Law and Estate Planning) to your clients. [Adding new service offerings](#) is another way to increase revenue with existing client accounts. And as you continue to add value through additional offerings, they're less likely to shop elsewhere for their legal services.

#### **5. Personalize Client Engagement**

A conscious effort to personalize pre and post-interaction engagement

##### Effective efforts:

- a. define the strategic branding goals for your target client demographic segments
- b. test messages, offers and content to ensure it appeals to the specific needs of your audience both pre and post-engagement
- c. equip and train staff to deliver an experience that wows clients.

#### **6. Pursue Innovation**

Law Firms can take a tip from CPA Firms who value or fixed pricing instead of hourly billing. Law Firms can do the same by [offering set packages of services](#), or taking a more consultative, value-add approach to client engagements.

Boutique-style, value-priced "packages" leave a "personalized" impact on the emotional relationship. Some firms have tiered their services into packages like:

- a. Personal:** 30-minute consultation prior to engagement; basic form of filing; and 15 minute client review
- b. Partner:** adds a one-hour options planning consultation with assigned paralegal to handhold file through the process
- c. Corporate:** adds unlimited, year-round phone/email access and representation on 2 file matters

## 7. Adopt Technologies which have been identified out of need

There are so many technologies available to help improve processes, deliver data insights, and open up new revenue streams. Though tempting, your Firm needs to assess your needs first and then seek technology solutions.

### Improve operational efficiencies like:

- a. quicker access to precedents and quick parts by customizing the Word ribbon;
- b. easier document search by way of a document management system;
- c. client portal to shares documents safely and securely;
- d. centralize and automate billing for timely client follow up

## 8. Get Data Smart

Law firms need to become more data-informed in order to make more sophisticated business decisions.

- What is the source of your business? New Business? Current Business?
- Which practice lines are most profitable?
- What is the turnaround time for commodity work? Who does this work?

## 9. Skill Up

Once you target key performance indicators and acquire data over time for these areas, get the right team (lawyers and staff) in place to act on trending data, turn data into information and recommendations.

By becoming more proficient in data analysis, your Firm will be able to derive better insights that enable customization of business development strategies, proactively support clients, and easily identify client buying patterns.

## 10. Tap into New Social Networks

94% of B2B buyers today perform online research before making a purchasing decision.

“Lawyers have limited hours, minutes even, to devote to marketing. To deliver impact, they need to use the right tool for the right task. Social media is the right tool to reach a large niche audience. Only, it doesn’t replace the good old-fashioned smile and handshake, the right tool for genuine connection. Lawyers who master both, will be the real rainmakers of our time.” <https://www.bekhor.ca/law-firm-marketing/>

## 11. Succession Planning

As the seasoned generation of lawyers approach retirement age, it's essential for firms to [make plans for the future](#) of your business. Ensure you "team" your approach to clients. Every member of the team should have built some level of trusted relationship with the client already such that transition to their new team lead is trusted and comfortable.

## Checklist: How to Retain More Clients

Don't let your clients leave for your competitors or take their legal needs in-house. Use the client retention best practices below to improve your firm's retention rate and grow existing client revenue.

### 1. Make Room for More Profitable Clients

**a. Deal with unresponsive clients:** those who are less likely to respond to requests for information without multiple contacts; those who do not pay and those that absorb your time unnecessarily.

**b. Phase out work which returns a low return on investment:** this means knowing the profitability and margins on your client matters (vital statistics!).

### 2. Consider Your Role as a Client Advisor

While most lawyers aren't keen on selling, being a client advisor isn't really about that. It's about building relationships with clients by making a concerted effort to understand their business and how you can help them make it better.

When you or your business development team meet with clients, leave selling at the door and instead focus on asking questions that help you identify legal needs and how you can help. Leverage the momentum of the current file matter to win new work on others.

### 3. Use Values and Community Connection

Nothing builds trust better than having core values in common and exhibiting concern and support for the same community as your clients. Have staff and lawyers get on board with an annual fundraiser; participate in local "Run for the Cure" or "Hamper Drive"; take active roles in your professional; athletic; or civic organizations

and clubs and let your clients know about it via social media.

#### **4. Boost your service value**

Creating a good service model could include such basic items as:

**a. Communicate with clients in a reasonably prompt manner.** This is one of the top complaints received by the Law Society. Number 1: the failure of law firms to return phone calls.

**b. Hire helpful office staff.** Depending on the size of your practice and your own practice philosophy, your staff members may interact with your clients more often than you do. It is important that your staff understand your service-value approach and implement it by being professional and helpful when interacting with clients.

**c. Provide alternative billing choices.** Find out their payment schedule and “go with their flow” or bill monthly so bills are more easily paid in a timely manner.

## **Trends into 2020**

### **To Date:**

”The Law Firm industry in Canada underwent [strong growth](#), with revenue expanding at an annualized rate of 1.9% to \$12.9 billion over the past five years to 2019.

Demand for legal services has been facilitated by restructurings, secondary offerings and other capital market activity. This has benefited the legal industry's larger firms, which receive the bulk of their revenue from corporate clientele.”

Canadian niche/specialized business growth, which has expanded the overall pool of potential legal clientele in those niche/specialized areas.

### **Top priorities moving forward:**

[Similar to prior years, the top priorities for CLOs in the coming year include:](#)

- a. Regulatory compliance
- b. Data privacy and security
- b. Maintaining awareness of business or industry activities that could have legal implications for the organization

### **We are keeping a watchful eye on and encourage you to be alert to:**

1. The Customer Experience Rising in Importance

2. Firms Specializing to Differentiate
3. Staffing up and Training for Business Development
4. The Team Approach Prevails
5. Technology is the Foundation for Efficient Workflow

### **It's Time to Act**

**Attracting new business. Retaining clients. Growing existing revenue.** These are all goals that should drive your Law Firm's growth goals. To hit those goals, you need to improve your client data, expand into new service offerings, and develop stronger relationships by taking advantage of the business development advice above.

**For a deeper insights and advise on how to scale your Law Firm,  
Contact Law Firm Leadership Alliance:**

**Call Gary Mitchell**, Principal Business Coach, OnTracCoach, [gary@ontraccoach.com](mailto:gary@ontraccoach.com)  
604.669.5235

**Call Lisa Dawson**. Operations Advisor, LJD Management. [ljdmanagement@shaw.ca](mailto:ljdmanagement@shaw.ca)  
604.341.1447

Our advice and best practices on winning new business, strengthening relationships, capitalizing on cross-serving opportunities, and more, is a brief call away.