

## Business & Careers

# Set clear targets to get best results possible



**Gary Mitchell**  
The Coach

When I first started coaching lawyers, my professional colleagues asked, “You’re going to do what, with whom?”

Given my target audience, with their common personality traits and practice challenges, I’ve been forced to become a better coach. What follows are not criticisms; merely observations, which I’m sure most lawyers would agree with.

For the most part, lawyers hate the idea of sales. Some of you even resent the fact that in today’s legal market you have to market yourself and your services. Many of you are introverted and hate networking. You are perfectionists,

which often prevents you from trying new things for fear of failing. Being highly risk-averse adds to that fear. You procrastinate to a fault. You are highly intellectual and often overthink things. To top it off, it’s in your nature to be highly sceptical.

And then there are the challenges you face in your practice. You are under incredible pressure to produce, living your life and career in six-minute increments. If it’s not the billable hour, then it’s your workload, and the constant struggle to find time for business development.

To effectively deal with these challenges, I’ve created a methodology for business development specifically for lawyers. It’s called TST: targeted, strategic and tactical. You must produce the best results in the least amount of time possible. This column will focus at how you can become more targeted.

In order to become more targeted in your approach, there are four key considerations.

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On Trac Coach

### To niche or not to niche?

Another important consideration in becoming more targeted is whether to become highly specialized in a certain area — a niche. There are certainly pros and cons to a niche practice. It allows you to target your audience more effectively. In becoming an expert in your field, you will fully understand the needs of your audience. That’s a plus. The downside sometimes is that your audience will be smaller. There won’t be as many potential clients for you. So if you are going to go the niche route, you’d better do a very good job of building your profile and becoming known as the “go-to” lawyer in the field.

If you stay broad in your focus, the upside will be that you’ll have a larger pool of clients to draw from. But I see several downsides. First, it is virtually impossible to market yourself and your services effectively over several markets. You won’t have the time to be everywhere at once.

Depending on your practice area, by staying broadly focused it’s harder to become known as the go-to for every area you are practising in. Consider what you really enjoy and what you’re good at. If there are complimentary practice areas that go hand-in-hand and you enjoy all of them, maybe it makes sense for you to stay broadly focused.

### Reaching your target market

Once you’ve addressed the first three considerations, and before you go out there in all directions with your new focus on marketing, the final consideration in becoming more targeted in your approach to business development is to understand where you can get in front of your target audience. The easiest and most effective way of determining this is simply to ask your current “ideal” clients, the ones you want more of.

What associations do they belong to? What events do they attend, and why? What publications do they read, and why? What are some of the most pressing challenges they are facing right now? I refer to this approach as “soft market research.” Asking your current clients these questions will tell you everything you need to know in how to get in front of people just like them.

Having followed this methodology has led my clients to produce amazing results. When you are pointed in the right direction and given the tools to succeed, because of your training, you learn very quickly. You are able to create new habits which help you excel in business development. Because you are such a tough audience, you’ve made me a better coach, and thank you for that.

*Gary Mitchell works with lawyers, law clerks and law firms across Canada helping them to attract more clients and grow their business. He is the author of *Raindance: The Business Development Guidebook for Lawyers*, and can be reached at [gary@ontraccoach.com](mailto:gary@ontraccoach.com) or 604-669-5235.*

### Acting Drainage Referee

Looking for a new challenge?

Consider the oldest special court in Ontario—The Court of the Drainage Referee.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food is looking for candidates for appointment as the Acting Drainage Referee under the Drainage Act. The Acting Referee acts in the position of the Drainage Referee when the Referee is not available to act, or when assigned by the Referee.

The Court of the Referee hears appeals on legal matters under the Drainage Act, including claims for damages and appeals from the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal. The powers of the Court of the Referee are similar to a judge of the Superior Court of Justice. The Drainage Act requires that the Acting Referee must be a judge of the Superior Court of Justice, or a barrister of at least 10 years standing at the bar of Ontario.

Drainage is an essential component of agriculture and is important to all of rural Ontario. The Drainage Act provides a democratic procedure that allows those who have drainage problems to petition the municipality for a solution. Costs are assessed to the lands in the watershed of the drainage works.

For more information about the position and the Ontario drainage program, visit <http://ontario.ca/btvj>.

Please reference the Acting Drainage Referee in your application and submit by June 6, 2014. Address applications to:

**Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
Environmental Management Branch  
1 Stone Road, 3rd Floor South East  
Guelph, Ontario N1K 4Y2**

The Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act, 2009, provides that all appointments shall be made through a competitive, merit-based process. The Ontario Public Service is an equal opportunity employer. Accommodation will be provided in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. We thank all interested parties, but only those applicants selected for an interview will be contacted.



### Analyze your ideal clients

Think about the type of clients you want more of. They are likely the ones you enjoy working with the most. They are more sophisticated. They appreciate your advice and service. They pay on time, and they tell others about you.

Consider what other qualities they may have and write them all down. If you are going to get out there and step up your marketing efforts, you might as well be targeting your “A list.”

### Consider your own values

Over the years I worked with several lawyers who had to make a change. When I got in there and began coaching them, we determined that one of the reasons they weren’t excelling at business development was that their own values were not aligned with the people they were serving. If you’re not happy working for the people you are working for, there’s not much motivation to go out and get more clients of the same ilk.

So consider what you value. What’s important to you? Are these things aligned with your current clients? If not, consider making a change for the long-term good of your career. If you’re just starting out, this is likely some advice you haven’t heard before and I highly advise you to take heed of it.