

Robin Hensley crafts subtle approach to coaching clients

By Ray Glier

Robin Hensley helps lawyers develop business, but you won't see her picture on billboards or find her hanging out in hospital emergency rooms.

In fact, Hensley doesn't exactly pull in the business for lawyers - she coaches her clients how to do it.

Call her the self-help rainmaker.

"We sow the seeds," said David Hagaman, a partner with **Ford & Harrison LLP**, which specializes in labor and employment. "She provides the water and fertilizer."

Hensley's company, [Raising the Bar](#), coaches some of the top guns at law and accounting firms on how to develop business for their firms and how to expand business with current clients.

Making it pour

Hensley has been coaching law firms for more than 10 years. She has clients from a number of major firms in the Atlanta area, 150 total.

"Being a good lawyer or good accountant is not enough these days," she said. "The firm wants you to be involved in recruiting and bringing in business."

Hensley's business is 75 percent lawyers. The other 25 percent is made up of accountants, engineers, and others in the professional service industry. She also has a select group of executive coaching clients.

It's easy to see how Hensley gets through the front door of firms that are looking for a business development coach. She worked for **Ernst & Young LLP** for five years and then spent six years as director of marketing for two law firms.

Hensley has spent the last four years with her own firm, which she moved to Atlantic Station in Midtown.

"I have done this successfully at **Ernst & Young** and been through the



Self-help rainmaker
Robin Hensley is
Raising the Bar for
Lawyers and Accountants
across Atlanta

same struggles as they have," said Hensley, who also serves on various boards of directors for companies in Atlanta. She also serves as chairman of the audit committee of a public company. I understand the terminology, the pressures, I know their world."



Training in Rainmaking:

Robin Hensley suggests attorneys expand their current relationships.

What helps set Hensley apart - aside from her resume - is a customized approach, she said. She won't teach a seminar. She prefers one-on-one sessions with different techniques, even when two of her clients are lawyers from the same law firm with the same specialty.

"Each lawyer and each accountant is different in their practice area." Hensley said. "So instead of throwing them into a seminar, I develop an individual marketing plan just for them and set measurable goals of where they are now and where they want to be."

Many lawyers, however, do not want to be in your face and go door-to-door drumming up business. Lawyers want to be careful they are not intruding on someone else's turf, she explained.

The key, said **Ford & Harrison's** Hagaman, is developing relationships that might extend past the workday.

"What Robin has helped me focus on is having a contact that is a relationship," Hagaman said, "Where she forced me to focus is thinking in terms of developing quality relationships with people that might be in a position to need me as a labor and employment lawyer some day."

Art of subtlety

Jill Pryor, a partner with **Bondurant, Mixson & Elmore LLP**, said Hensley's idea of networking is more subtle than working a room with a fistful of business cards.

"One of the things Robin does is she analyzes where our business comes from and she tries to get us exposure to the people who will send us clients," Pryor said.

Hensley said the best marketers strategically develop referral sources rather than aggressively hunt them because those marketers have two skills - they listen and they ask the right questions of the right person, or the decision-maker.

There are other key ingredients to Hensley's approach. One is what

Hagaman labels "cross-selling."

"It's a matter of expanding business with current clients," Hagaman said.

Raising the bar also means changing directions. If one approach has very little yield, Hensley wants to try something different.

"One of the things we constantly reassess is all the things we are doing working," Pryor said. "Are we better off spending our efforts in other directions?"

Hensley coaches even skilled lawyers who already know how to drive business.

"Even Tiger Woods has a coach," said Hensley, who graduated magna cum laude in accounting from Georgia State University in 1977. "The best Olympians use coaches. I have no agenda but their success. They realize I am someone with a 10-plus years of experience in this field who will give them a competitive edge."

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