



HOW TO DO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR TRACKIES

BY SUE-ELLA PRODONOVICH

Stay at home orders, the Delta strain, remote working and homeschooling. This is the strange reality in which most of us now live. At the time of writing, half of Australia is in lockdown once again. The office seems a world away as we're back in our home offices, bedrooms, kitchens or loungerooms, trying to do get our work down and run our businesses without ever leaving home.

Billy Joel may have been in a [New York State of Mind](#) but, frankly, a lot of us are now in a trackies state of mind (that's Aussie slang for tracksuit pants, or sweatpants for my North American friends). We're slopping about the home in athleisure and wondering when on earth we'll ever get out again. When that happens, business development (BD) can become the absolute last thing that we're thinking of.

So to keep you motivated I've developed this list of 11 things you can do to get your BD done and keep your practice ticking along and growing even if you're in a Delta funk.

1. SHARPEN YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

If you've been given a list of clients to look after or targets you need to pursue, this is a good time to assess how you're tracking and where you need to do a bit more work. Now's the time to replace "various" with specifics in your business plan. You should also reflect on what's been working and what hasn't.

I think it often helps to go through every client you've worked with over the past three years and have a think about the work you did, what triggered it, how much you enjoyed it and how much you want to do it again. Write down a score about how happy you think they were with your work (a bit of client feedback should be able to tell you exactly how happy they were). But also write down a score about how happy you were working with them.

If you want to really make this effective, use a formal model such as the [BCG Growth Matrix](#). When you've got that you have a blueprint for where you should be prioritising your attention.

2. START SOME CAMPAIGNS

Like anything in life, BD gets boring (and less effective) if it just goes on and on. You need to break it into chunks. So start doing your BD in short, sharp bursts rather than letting it just meander. Better still, think like an advertising agency and turn it into a series of campaigns that you plan, execute and measure.

Give yourself, say, one month to prepare, one month to take action, and one month to review your efforts. That way you'll be able to stay focused and refine what you're doing, setting yourself up to make sure your next campaign is even better still.

3. WRITE THREE ARTICLES

In times like these, writing articles is one of the most effective ways to get the word out and make sure people still know you're still there. So I suggest getting one article ready to send out to your mailing list in the next week or so and then having two ready to go in the hopper.

I know what you're thinking - that sounds like a lot of work. But it doesn't have to be quite as onerous as you think. If you've written past articles or given presentations over the past year or two, now might be a good time to update and repurpose them. I know most professionals are perfectionists and think they need to start again from scratch. But trust me, there's absolutely no shame in taking shortcuts if the end result is just as effective.

4. DE-LAYER OR DELETE AN ACTIVITY

Let's look on the bright side of lockdown. Having a break in our day-to-day cycles can stop the 'automaticity' of things. It can make us pause to think about how we're using our time and give us the opportunity to consider whether it could be better spent elsewhere.

This should be when you review all those locked-in one-hour admin meetings you have sitting in your calendar to assess whether they're really necessary. What about that network or group you've joined. How much are you getting out of it?

Alternatively, this could be when you review all the work you've been writing off. Could you re-position and re-package your services so that you get to charge for the stuff you automatically gave away?

5. REVISIT YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

Let's be honest, the more established social media platforms become, the more annoying they got. There are only so many inspirational quotes or 'team shout-outs' we can take before LinkedIn makes us log out. There are only so many conspiracy theory posting uncles or cousins we can handle before we want to delete our Facebook account. But if you're only seeing this side of social media, I think you're missing a trick.

Both LinkedIn and Facebook have become more niche and there are more like-minded people you can connect with or follow, especially through group pages. They're also good places to check in and see who's been promoted, who's moved about and what's going on more generally.

If you're not following your clients' social media accounts, now's the time to change that too. Is there a tip you can take from them about what to do (or what not to)?

6. REACH OUT TO A CONTACT

Trust me, I hate the phrase 'reaching out' as much as you do but it probably is the right phrase to use right here. Why not send a note or even pick up the phone and call one of your clients and referrers? Not to hustle for work but just to check in and see how they're getting on.

One thing working from home has done is make us see each other as more human. Byzantine hierarchies are giving way to fast-track good ideas. Now might be the best time to reach out directly to that head honcho you've tip-toed around these past years.

After all, no one bats an eyelid when a cat climbs across the keyboard or the kids make noise in the background. Remember the shock back in 2017 when [the kids busted into a BBC interview?](#)

Nearly 40 years ago, Mark Granovetter's landmark study on networks showed conclusively that the best leads for business opportunities are more likely to come from your more distant colleagues and friends, as opposed to your closest ones.

Just be careful not to overshare. It can make people uncomfortable, even in an informal setting.

7. DO A DUE DILIGENCE ON YOUR PRACTICE

If you don't understand the drivers in your firm, you're not alone. In my experience, a lot of professionals don't know who does what in their own business - as in, which clients people service, what their areas of expertise are and who's bringing in the work. And the bigger the firm, the worse this problem often is.

Why not use this time to get to know your firm's marketing plan? Learn about the other areas of practice, who works there and what problems they're known for solving. Perhaps you could ask to be a 'guest observer' in another section's professional development session, just to get an even better handle on what's going on.

8. PICK ONE CLIENT AND ZONE IN

It's not just your own business that due diligence works for; you can also use them to great effect on your clients. So, pick one, get out your key account plan and really get stuck into the nitty-gritty about them. Look at any changes in their performance and why they're happening, find out who their new recruits are and where they come from, see if you can discover who's setting the agenda.

In short, analyse where the information gaps are and fill them in.

9. FINE-TUNE WHAT YOU DO

I've said in the past that the *Rainmaker is Dead*; competence is the new competitive advantage. So if you're feeling a bit shaky on some technical aspects of what you do, or even if you haven't taken a refresher course in a while, this is a good time to change it.

If you have a learning and development team, get in touch with them and find out what they can do to help. If not, do your own research and find out what's out there to help. Doing the mandatory minimum doesn't cut it anymore.

10. WORK AT YOUR MARGINS

Successful businesses aren't usually built on landing one or two big clients or retaining the same roster year after year. They come from getting more out of a range of sources. If you know the economics of your own practice, you don't have to slay a giant. You can probably tweak a few things around the edges to make your bottom line better.

You should also try to find out what impact the lockdown has is having on your business more generally. How is your utilisation and lock-up changing? Where is the new work coming from and what sources have dried up for now? By using this information, you can navigate your way through this confidently and hit the ground running once it finally ends.

11. HAVE A 45-MINUTE CHAT

Finally, if you want to boost your BD during lockdown, you could shortcut everything and [book into a session of BD45](#).

BD45 gives you an exclusive one-on-one online session with me, in which we shoot the breeze about anything business development-related. I can work with you to analyse what you're doing, reveal where the easy wins are and brainstorm what you could be doing better.

And best of all you can do [BD45](#) in your trackies.

FURTHER READING

Boston Consulting Group [What Is The Growth Share Matrix?](#)

Granovetter, M. (1973) The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2776392>

Hansen, M (2018) [How to Work Smarter Not Harder](#)

Law Firm Ambition (Feb 2021) [How to Maximise Utilisation and Minimise Lock-up](#)

Prodonovich (March 2021) [Obituary: The Coffee Catch up](#)

Prodonovich (Sept 2020) [Why You Should Build Your BD Around the Rhythms of Your Day](#)

Prodonovich (April 2020) [The Rules For BD During COVID](#)

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