

# Building Business

I recently spoke at a new lawyer CLE in Austin, but it might have been me who learned the most during the course. One question particularly caught my attention. A young lawyer asked, "How do you develop business when you spend all your time with attorneys?" That question was particularly notable to me because I have a new private practice myself. Business development is certainly on my radar and has been since I began my private practice part time in 2010.

This past January, my dear friend and partner, Kristy Blanchard, and I began to determine how we would market ourselves and where we would look for business when our practice went full time. It was natural

to initially turn to our many friends who are attorneys; yet, as I noted to the attorney in the CLE, lawyers cannot be your primary bread and butter if you really want to excel. Certainly attorneys can be a good source of business, but they are ultimately competitors. To fully succeed, one must originate business and find clients in environments outside the courtroom. I discovered that attending chamber meetings, being involved in youth sports, and doing volunteer work are all more effective than simply waiting on referrals from peers.

My most profound business relationship developed from simply inviting an old friend to catch up over a beer. My buddy Shane Barron has run a successful financial services

business, Economic Wealth Solutions, in Waco for many years. As we sat discussing my new practice, Shane became interested in my desire to be more involved in wills, trusts, and estate planning. To make a long story short, a brief reunion with someone outside the legal industry transpired into sharing an office and doing a significant amount of my business with Shane in an area where I wanted to find more clients. That would never have happened had I not gotten out of my day-to-day legal circles and met with a professional from another field.

This is a critical issue for many new attorneys, which is why TYLA is introducing *Building Business Outside the Courtroom*, a project to put young lawyers in contact with other young professionals. Professional development luncheons in four Texas cities will feature a speaker discussing the law as it pertains to various selected industries. For example, TYLA may invite local engineers and architects to attend a luncheon that will feature a discussion of emerging legal issues in the construction industry. Local young lawyers will also be invited and will be able to network with the other professionals, who hopefully may one day become clients. TYLA will seek CLE credit for the attending attorneys and CE credit for the non-attorney professionals.

Successful firms and attorneys must get out of legal circles and find clients in other areas, but doing so can be very intimidating. TYLA hopes to make the initial step "Outside the Courtroom" a little less daunting.



**C. BARRETT THOMAS**

President,  
Texas Young Lawyers Association