

## Rainmaker Q&A: Dowd Bennett's James Martin

Law360, New York (September 26, 2016, 10:49 AM EDT) -- James G. Martin, is a partner at Dowd Bennett LLP in St. Louis and a former U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri. He concentrates in the areas of complex business litigation, white collar criminal defense, and corporate governance and compliance.

Martin has served as lead defense counsel in numerous class action and other major civil litigation matters. Those include Securities and Exchange Commission fraud actions, high-profile white collar criminal litigation, major health care fraud cases, and False Claims Act litigation.

As a federal prosecutor, he was successful in the prosecution of white collar crime, public corruption and tax fraud. In 1999 and 2000, Martin spent a year and a half working with former Senator John Danforth, R-Mo., in the Office of Special Counsel, serving as Director of Investigative Operations.



James G. Martin

### **Q: What skill was most important for you in becoming a rainmaker?**

A: I was fortunate enough to have worked both as an assistant U.S. attorney and as the U.S. attorney, which frequently put me in the public light. As a result, I had earned significant name recognition within the legal community. This recognition helped generate referrals when I went into private practice. But, the key is how you handle referrals once they start coming to you.

Obviously, handling the case or matter professionally is very important, but, what's just as important for future referrals is managing the clients — a skill that is sometimes ignored. Convincing the client that their case is very important, demonstrating empathy to their concerns and issues, and always being responsive to their inquiries (big or small) can create a client who strongly wants to recommend you to others.

### **Q: How do you prepare a pitch for a potential new client?**

A: The short answer is by doing a lot of homework. It is critical to know the company and the issues inside and out before making a pitch. Yet, it is important in any pitch to be a good listener. Get the prospective client to talk about their needs and goals, then format the information you want to share to best sell your services.

It's also important to have the right people with you to make a pitch. Too many lawyers try to present themselves as a jack of all trades. Instead, create teams to offer a panel of strengths to the client. Team members should be able to present well and have the specific skills needed to best serve the prospective client.

### **Q: Share an example of a time when landing a client was especially difficult, and how you handled it.**

A: We were seeking the engagement from a prospective client with significant international business. We knew the competing firm had more depth in experience and a strong personal relationship with the prospective client. While we did spend significant time selling our skill set,

we spent more time talking about how to manage the business and personal side of the litigation.

We talked about how litigation would be disruptive to the business, and how to effectively manage and minimize that disruption. We talked about how the executives directly involved would be personally impacted, and how to manage those aspects. In essence, we offered a holistic approach that made the prospective client feel like we cared about them as a company and as individuals. And in the end, we did get the engagement

**Q: What should aspiring rainmakers focus on when beginning their law careers?**

A: The obvious first answer is to be a good lawyer. Second, make friends within your firm — people who you can include in teams to pitch potential clients. Third, network. Stay in touch with both your college and law school classmates, as they are the most likely to send you business. Join organizations, but not too many. You need to develop solid relationships, so don't spread yourself too thin. Fourth, be patient. Young lawyers should not expect to be rainmakers anytime soon after beginning their practice. You should mostly expect to get business from contemporaries, and know it will take some aging before people are in a position to send business your way.

**Q: What's the most challenging aspect of remaining a rainmaker?**

A: Staying on top of the work you bring in. Clients bring matters to you because they trust you and are relying on you. When they have concerns about the progress of the case, they'll reach out and want to talk. Balancing a collection of cases and being on top of all of them is imperative to maintaining strong relationships with the clients, and necessary to have repeat and referral business in the future.

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