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Using Games to Teach Business Development Skills

Kevin McMurdo
McMurdo Consulting

Business development training should focus on one or more of the following areas:

- Product knowledge. How much do your lawyers know about the firm, its client portfolio, areas of expertise, individual capabilities? How much do your lawyers know about each other? Lawyers, as a group, are often high achievers, with diverse interests outside the practice of law. Knowing this information can often create opportunities to introduce partners to clients with similar interests, promoting rapport building and trust.

- Interpersonal skills. Business development is a contact sport, based on rapport, trust and relationships. How we behave with others – and more importantly, how we are perceived by others based on our behavior – is critical to building positive rapport, trust and opportunity.

- Reputation enhancement. What are your lawyers known for? Diligence? Responsiveness? Analytical skills? Business acumen? Do your lawyers possess significant expertise in a specific practice niche? Knowledge in a particular industry sector? How do your lawyers communicate their distinctive qualities and expertise? Prospects seek rapport and experience when looking to hire a lawyer.

- Client service. Our most important business development assets are happy, indeed enthusiastic, clients. How well-equipped are your lawyers to recognize and respond to the needs of their clients? What policies, processes and support does your firm utilize to maintain and enhance the client experience?

A well-rounded business development training curriculum should include opportunities for lawyers and staff to improve in all four areas. And, the use of games can be an effective tool to train lawyers in business development.

Need convincing? Here are ten reasons why games work in business development training.

1. Games enhance interest and focus.
2. Games can be disarming.
3. Games build teams.
4. Games provide opportunities for practice without serious consequences.
5. Games let people try out different roles in a non-threatening environment.
6. Games make abstract concepts more concrete. A plus when working with lawyers.
7. Games teach group decision-making skills.
8. Games provoke thought on multiple levels.
9. Games provide reinforcement and reward.
10. Games appeal to different learning styles.

Building games into your training curriculum is creative, fun and rewarding. Listed below are six game templates for your consideration. Designed for groups, they can be modified for individual and elearning as well. I have included a few gamification resources as well. Enjoy.

Game Templates

<u>The Envelope Please.</u>

Thank Thiagarajan Sivasailam (Thiagi) for this versatile, low-tech game. It is my favorite. Thiagi has written many books on game design and learning, and I have listed my favorite on the resource page.

<u>The Game</u>. The envelopes game can be used in just about any situation. It works best in a 60-90 minute time period, and with groups of 25 to 40 participants. But, it is very scalable.

1. Draft "scenarios" around the topics or situations you want the group to address (examples: preparing for a pitch, meeting with a prospect, client service strategies). Each scenario should describe a "situation" and ask for a specific response ("list three things you would recommend," "outline a strategy," "provide a client story"). The number of "scenarios" must equal the number of participating teams.
2. Tape each scenario to the outside of a 10x13 envelope. Insert blank paper inside each envelope – one page for each team. (Use colored paper and assign each team its own color.)
3. Give teams 5-6 minutes to read the scenario and write their responses.
4. Teams then exchange envelopes and repeat the process until all teams have worked on all scenarios – save one. In the last round, teams evaluate the responses provided by the other teams, assigning points.

<u>The Debrief</u>. The fun is in the game; the learning is in the debrief. Each team, along with the facilitator, leads the debrief discussion for the scenario it judged. The facilitator should emphasize key concepts designed into each scenario (firm policies, available resources, additional responses, applications to real world situations).

The Follow-up. Close the session by listing the "best lessons learned" shared by members of the group. Distribute a summary of notes from all the response sheets, including suggestions on how to implement some of the responses in the firm.

What's My Line: A Quiz Show.

The Game. I first played this game while at a Coopers & Lybrand regional meeting in the late 1990s, and it still works wonders, particularly in a retreat setting. Designed to improve product knowledge, "What's My Line" is an engaging way to introduce and discuss many topics to a larger group – new lateral capabilities, recent wins, new clients, policy changes, and more.

1. The facilitator/Master of Ceremonies, invites randomly-selected individuals from the group (a blind drawing works best) to form into two or three small, impromptu teams.
2. The MC reads a "judgment" question to the entire group.
3. Teams are given a few minutes to develop their responses.
4. During that time the Facilitator can pose fact-based questions to the audience. These questions can further strengthen "product knowledge" and focus on specific experience, clients, and expertise as well as interesting facts about members of the group.
5. The teams present their responses to the audience who select the winner. (Wireless polling works well for this.)

The Debrief. The votes have been cast, and the winning team has been rewarded. The MC then invites pre-selected "experts" to respond to the question and share their point of view. The experts should know the questions in advance, so they have time to prepare their responses. The MC facilitates the ensuing discussion, directing comments from the rest of the group.

Follow-up. Send notes from the session to all participants, encouraging each to share them with others.

The Play's the Thing: Role Play.

Role play games, when managed effectively, are a great way to develop interpersonal skills through observation and practice.

The Game. This role play game was designed for a partner meeting of approximately 150 attorneys, seated in fifteen rounds of ten at a retreat. It is easily adapted to smaller groups or video recorded for use in elearning modules.

1. Each table selects one among them to be the "relationship partner," and one among them to be the "client." This is an important step, so encourage tables to choose wisely.
2. Everyone else at the tables is an "observer," each assigned different observational responsibilities (body language and positioning, expressions of emotion, word choice, rhetorical quality, and flow and outcome. Everyone should have a job.
3. Present a client service "situation" to the entire group. Examples might include an unexpected invoice, a missed deadline or disappointing result, a slow pay client, rude behavior complaint – the options are many. Draft the situations in simple terms,

customized to the nomenclature of the firm. Encourage the “clients” and “partners” to create situations that are inventive but realistic and instructive.

4. The facilitator should move deliberately among the tables during the game, listening closely at each table without interruption for 45-60 seconds. This information will help her direct the discussion to different tables.
5. After ten minutes (or when you sense that most of the tables have completed the assignment) start the debrief.

<u>The Debrief</u>. There is much to learn from the debrief following a role play game. Start by asking the “clients” and “partners” to share their thoughts and feelings, looking for the positive. Not all will respond; that’s ok. Then ask observers to share their thoughts and observations. The facilitator should direct questions to multiple tables. As the discussion unfolds, develop an agreed-upon list of “best practices” that emerge from the discussion.

Repeat the game with a different service problem, and different “lawyers” and “clients.” Each round typically takes from 20-30 minutes, but gauge the time by the tenor of the discussion.

<u>Follow-up</u>. Collect the notes from each of the tables (always assign a scrivener), translate them into a checklist or organized set of client service reminders, and distribute the reminders to all who participated.

<u>Lunchtime BINGO</u>.

<u>The Game</u>. Cynthia Voth gets the credit for this game. Everyone should know the rules of BINGO.

- Cynthia and her team designed individual BINGO cards for every attorney/player in the firm.
- Players completed their squares by enjoying lunch or drinks with their “BINGO colleagues.” (The firm agreed to reimburse for each meeting, up to $20 per.)
- The campaign continued for three months.
- Each completed BINGO line earned a chance at winning a $500 gift card to keep or for charity.
- BINGO cards were displayed prominently outside each player’s office, for extra incentive.

According to Cynthia, BINGO was an easy way for the lawyers from Seattle-based Graham & Dunn to meet many of their new colleagues from Portland-Based Miller Nash. The firms merged last year, creating new office combinations in both cities. The key custom cards were the key. Matching lawyers with similar personal interests, complimentary practices and/or industry expertise was critical to the success of the game – and the espirit de corps sparked by the meetings.

The flexibility of the BINGO template allows for lots of creativity. It can be a great way to “combine” different groups, promote cross marketing and improve product knowledge. For example, include squares that ask the players to complete a variety of tasks – visiting clients, adding personal notes to client invoices, writing a client alert or blog posting, you name it. Post the names of BINGO winners prominently on the firm intranet or internal newsletter.

The Debrief. Ask players to share something they learned along with their request for reimbursement.

Follow-up. Draft a summary of what was learned (the interesting stuff) and distribute it broadly.

Another example: Challenge administrative assistants, grouped into teams, to enter new and/or updated contact information into the CRM system. For every [name your number] entries, the team earns the right to draw from a deck of cards. The campaign should allow sufficient time for teams to collect at least seven cards. At the conclusion of the campaign, the teams draw their respective number of cards. The best five card poker hand is treated to a team lunch outside the office (or other reward).

Client Experience.

Credit for this game goes to Craig Courter, Global COO at Baker McKenzie, who made it happen while he was COO at Perkins Coie a few years back. Craig recognized the value of exposing professional staff to the challenges that relationship partners face when managing large, complex client relationships. He also understood the value of partners learning how support staff could enhance client service.

The Game. *Client Experience* brings together a select group of professional staff from all support departments – facilities, HR, records, marketing, accounting, conflicts, technology, practice management, eDiscovery, library, training – you name it. For multi-office firms, this often involves travel. It will be worth it.

1. Divide the group into teams with representatives from different groups. Mix 'em up.
2. Connect each team and a partner responsible for the overall relationship with a major client.
3. Give each team time (a week is usually sufficient – prior to travel) to conduct research and prepare for a comprehensive interview with the relationship partner.
4. Working with the information they gather about the client from their research and the interview, each team drafts a custom client service plan for their client.
5. The entire group gathers, and each team presents its plan in detail to the group of relationship partners. A facilitated discussion follows.

The Debrief. Conduct a debrief discussion at the conclusion of all presentations/discussions. Teams complete a self-evaluation and share their answers with the group.

Who wins? There are many ways to determine a winner. In our experience, the individual teams, as well as the relationship partners (all carefully selected for their enthusiastic support of the program), found the game rewarding in itself. An impressive number of positive process changes – all impacting clients directly or indirectly – resulted from the game. However, we hosted a celebratory dinner and a trivia competition. Wonderful espirit de corps.

Follow-up. A summary description of the game and its takeaways was distributed to all lawyers and staff.

Innovation Tournament.

I borrowed this wonderful idea from Mark Usellis at Davis Wright Tremaine, and customized it to work with a client of approximately 90 lawyers.

Three months before their annual lawyer retreat, the firm invited all lawyers and staff to submit, in 50 words or less, any and all ideas that attempted to satisfy one or more of the following:

- Improve efficiency of client service;
- Create a realistic opportunity to develop a new market;
- Hold the potential to differentiate the firm through expertise or service delivery; or
- Create an environment of camaraderie and team spirit.

All submissions were recognized and warded. Many were simply implemented.

Three weeks prior to the retreat, a group of decision-makers reviewed the ideas, bundled together related submissions and selected nine to be discussed at the retreat. The CMO and marketing partner recruited nine group leaders in advance of the retreat and worked with each to identify background materials that would benefit the retreat discussion.

At the retreat, nine groups of approximately 10 lawyers were given three hours to develop a strategy for their assigned idea and draft an implementation plan – including estimates of financial and personnel resource requirements and KPIs. Each team was allotted 10 minutes to present its assigned idea and recommended approach. Using anonymous polling, the group selected three ideas for implementation.

The nine ideas ranged from establishing an alumni program, to creating a start-up incubator in collaboration with a local community college.

<u>The Debrief</u>. The following day, the entire group discussed the three chosen ideas (now projects) in detail. Individuals volunteered to participate for each of the projects, and “first meetings” were scheduled before the group adjourned.

<u>Follow-up</u>. The CMO and Marketing Partner continue to send updates to the firm on the chosen projects.

<u>A Slightly Different Approach</u>. Mark Usellis and his client, a firm of approximately 60 attorney, took a different path to the same destination. The invitation and selection process was the similar to that described above. Then the process changed, however. Individual lawyers were recruited beforehand and given three minutes to pitch one of ten pre-selected “innovations” to the retreat participants. The group selected three “finalists” and divided into teams of equal size to work on strategy and implementation plans. The three teams were allotted 10 minutes each to present its idea to a panel of judges including Mark (the consultant) and two of the firm’s major clients. The winning innovation was implemented over the course of the following year.

Resources

Blogs:

Legal Skills Prof Blog.
Legal Skills Prof Blog
Editors:
James B. Levy
Associate Professor of Law
Nova Southeastern Univ. School of Law

Louis J. Sirico, Jr
Professor of Law
Director of Legal Writing
Villanova Univ. School of Law

Law Professors Blogs Network
Law Professors Blog

Pinhawk Education and Training Daily
Education and Training Daily
Amy Bowser-Rollins, Editor
Adjunct Instructor
Georgetown University, SCS
Paralegal Program

Training Magazine
Training Magazine

Attorney at Work
http://www.attorneyatwork.com/
Merrilyn Austin Tarleton

Elearning
http://www.capterra.com/training-software/
Comprehensive overview of dozens of elearning software options

Online Course

Gamification
Gamification
Kevin Werbach
Associate Professor
Legal Studies & Business Ethics
Wharton School
University of Pennsylvania

Book

Design Your Own Games and Activities
Sivasailam Thiagarajan, Editor
Resident Mad Scientist at Workshops by Thiagi
© 2003 – John Wiley and Sons
Dozens of game templates, includes a CD and an excellent bibliography

Organizations

Training Magazine Network
https://trainingmag.com

North America Simulation and Gaming Association
www.nasaga.org