

Building your managerial skills (so you'll be better at business development)

To be a very successful business developer you need to be a skilled and confident manager too, or you'll unnecessarily restrict yourself. Many professionals only develop business they can deliver themselves because they won't delegate the work to others. They fear that if they have too many clients or too many projects, quality will decline as others do more and more of the work.

Ensuring high quality work

A professional needs to be sure the work they deliver lives up to the promise they've made (or what their brand, track record and pricing implies). For most professionals with a growing book of business, ensuring high quality requires:

- Figuring out how they do their own work on their best projects
- Conveying to others how to replicate that approach
- Figuring out and executing a strategy for monitoring the work as it develops
- Intervening strategically only when necessary to correct poor quality and delays

How you do your own work

Many outstanding professionals are "unconsciously competent." They do their work extremely well, but cannot explain their decision process or their actions. To guide others though, they need to become "consciously competent"; they need to understand their own methods. Often you can gain this understanding by looking at several very successful projects and seeing what's common across them -- which steps did you take in which order, which frameworks did you use to understand the situation, which resources did you use at what point?

Conveying to others how to do the work

Now that you know your process, you can share it with others. Providing others a process to use (even if they don't have the same talent as you do) will typically be much more effective than either turning them loose with poor guidance or trying to do everything yourself. They can modify your process to make it work better for them, ideally by talking with you about changes before making them.

Monitoring the work as it develops

You need to design an appropriately intrusive approach to monitor the quality of the work. For

example, there may be key interim products (e.g., an initial outline of a document, a wireframe of a website, a storyline of a presentation) that let you see the direction your colleagues are taking when you can see the quality of their work and thinking but still easily influence the work and steer them in the right direction.

Intervening strategically

You need a plan for intervening when work is not progressing as you'd like. When will you intervene? How will you coach and support your colleagues so they can try again? What kinds of guidance and direction or dialogue will be helpful? What kinds of guidance will be unhelpful? How will you know the time has arrived when you must in fact dive in and do much of the work yourself?

Managing relationships at your clients

A project is a critical time for developing relationships. When you have multiple clients or projects, you will not be able to manage all the existing relationships or create all the new relationships. You need therefore to figure out who will be responsible for which relationships, and have a process to monitor the health of those relationships. You can make a list of the relevant people you know or would like to know and assign them to yourself or different colleagues. Part of the monitoring approach will usually be to ask your colleague for a planned, periodic update on what is happening with a relationship (in terms of progress on content, process, tone; and expected next steps). You can also tell both the client person and your colleague that you'll be checking in with the client periodically to make sure everything is going smoothly from their perspective as well.

What to do this week

Think about your work process on your most successful projects. This is a great exercise for anyone, even someone who works alone. Understanding how you are successful:

- Lets you differentiate yourself from others in your business development communications, and
- Makes it likely you'll be more reliably successful in your client work (which is also good for getting more work!).

If you work with others on some projects, pick one to use as a pilot. Share your process with others, and develop a first pass at a monitoring approach.

What are these tips?

These monthly tips help professionals create more business and enjoy their work more. We focus on how to start relationships, how to build relationships, and how to convert those relationships into sales. Visit our [archives](#) to learn more.