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yet these non-technical, soft skills have become an essential part of the professional's role, especially for those who are on the partner track.

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There was a time when business was simple. A great lead would come from a mutual acquaintance or networking event and soon, after a lunch meeting or two, that great lead would become a great client.

Now, professionals have to network in-person and online, in addition to managing the expectation that they're more expert, available and valuable than their competition. Moreover, the leads these professionals are working with need to be

tracked through the sales funnel to measure the effectiveness of the tools and tactics

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The concept of whole firm business development is nothing new. However, many of the tools for tracking lead activity online, where much of the decision-making process happens, are new. "Members are eager to discuss, during our marketing and business development practice group meetings, what tools and tactics are the most effective. They understand what will happen if their firm is too slow to embrace new technology and falls behind," notes Schwartz.

In these discussions with partners and marketers, BKR International has identified ways for all firm professionals to convert leads into clients more effectively.

## 1. NARROW YOUR AUDIENCE.

Firms are often too broad when deciding on their target audience. Trying to reach everyone through your efforts will only result in generic messaging that gets lost in the heavy stream of content they receive. Clearly define who your prospects are and what you want to accomplish with them.

Here are some tips:

- **Narrow your niche focus.** Instead of choosing oil and gas, focus on oil and gas lessees. Instead of focusing on manufacturers, focus on custom manufacturers. Instead of focusing on agriculture, focus on specialty crop agriculture. Subsets of industry provide increased opportunities to stand out from the crowd of firms marketing to the general industry...and you can still be visible to the larger industry.
- **Create personas for your 'A' clients.** Think about your best clients and make a list of what they read, where they network (in-person and online) and what challenges they're facing. Keep this list close to help you create social posts or share relevant articles about their business.

- **Measure small and large victories.** Don't diminish the value of small victories,

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nurturing strategy generate 50 percent more leads who are ready to buy — at 33 percent lower cost. A recent presentation to BKR members from Art Kuesel of Kuesel Consulting offered the following tips:

- Ask talented rainmakers in your firm how they do it. Shadow them on a call.
- Schedule time on your calendar for business development every week.
- Listen carefully to your leads about their wants, needs and pains; create a follow-up loop that demonstrates what you heard and what their next steps could be. Start consulting right away rather than selling.

“Make a commitment and begin to immerse yourself in the world of your prospects,” Kuesel advised.

Your strategy should be cohesive, with different parts playing off of each other. For example, if you write an article for a trade publication, you might invite the reader to download a related whitepaper on your website or subscribe to a niche eblast. Every action your audience performs should be followed by directions to complete another action. These “calls to action” encourage them to learn more about your firm's experience with leads like them. As they grow in trust, you will warm them up to the idea of a call or meeting, especially if you are sharing information that directly addresses their pains or growth interests.

### **3. TRACK AND REFINE YOUR EFFORTS.**

Every action taken on your website is trackable. Ask the lead to fill out a short form so you can track who is downloading a resource. If you are creating new content for your website, make sure the page performance (time on page, number of visitor sessions, etc.) is being monitored. If the content does well, create more content around a related topic. If the content doesn't do well, identify what the problem might be. The same can be done for content posted on firm social media pages. Use

the channel's analytics to review what people are paying attention to so you can

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are done by just one person or department within your firm. "The most successful firms have a marketing culture and approach prospects and client relationships as a team effort, not just as a marketing or partner responsibility," says David Goldner, managing partner of GrossMendelsohn CPAs and Advisors in Baltimore and the previous BKR Americas Chairman. "Encouraging each professional to develop business relationships takes them from just being a number cruncher and gives them that sense of accomplishment one gets working directly with clients and referral sources. You are then supporting both business development *and* employee satisfaction and retention goals."

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