

Business Development Case Exercises

1. Maya — The Strategic Shifter

Maya is a senior associate at a regional firm working mostly on bankruptcy and restructuring matters. Over the past year, she's become increasingly interested in corporate finance and is especially drawn to working with private credit lenders. She's been able to work on a few deals with one of the corporate partners. She wants to change her practice focus but her external reputation and relationships are squarely tied to bankruptcy matters. She's hesitant to reach out to potential referral sources in the finance space, worried she'll come across as inexperienced. She's also unsure whether to include both practice areas in her LinkedIn and bio—or go all in on the new focus.

Prompts:

- What can Maya do now to begin repositioning herself externally?
- How should she message this shift to past referral sources?
- Who inside or outside the firm could help accelerate this transition?

2. Brian — The Quiet Climber

Brian is a fifth-year associate in the litigation group at a national firm. He consistently earns praise for his writing and case strategy and has become a go-to associate for trial teams. Senior partners have started including him in client calls, hinting that he should start thinking about client development. Brian appreciates the recognition but feels unprepared—he doesn't see himself as "a salesperson," avoids networking events, and doesn't know what kind of clients he'd attract. He recently reconnected with a former law school classmate who is in-house at a tech company but didn't know how to steer the conversation toward future work.

Prompts:

- How can Brian begin to define his target market and ideal client profile?

- What low-effort strategies could help him build visibility and confidence?
- How should he follow up with contacts without sounding transactional?

3. Alexis — The Platform Builder

Alexis is a junior partner at a midsize full-service firm. She leads the labor and employment practice and chairs a DEI committee. Her calendar is packed: she's managing clients, mentoring associates, and leading a few internal initiatives. She knows she needs to be more intentional about business development—she often follows up too slowly, loses track of prospective clients, and says yes to too many low-return networking opportunities. She wants to build a practice that's sustainable and scalable, but she hasn't carved out time to step back and focus on where to invest her energy.

Prompts:

- What activities should Alexis prioritize to generate meaningful growth?
- How can she systematize her follow-up and tracking?
- Who can she delegate to—or what support should she ask the firm for?

4. Jordan — The Exit Strategist

Jordan is a senior counsel at a global firm, focused on IP strategy and licensing for software and gaming companies. While she hasn't originated much work, she's worked with a varied portfolio of tech and medical/healthcare clients and is well respected by partners and clients alike. She knows she needs to think about generating her own book if she wants to continue to grow at the firm. Quietly, though, she's starting to think about a move in-house—ideally to a company in the gaming or interactive media space. She's not ready to make a jump, but she wants to start planting seeds and refining how she's perceived externally. Her question is how to build more opportunities for herself in the short term that will also set her up to succeed at her long-term goals.

Prompts:



Skadden

- How can Jordan raise her visibility in the tech/gaming industry strategically?
- What thought leadership or networking activities might open the right doors?
- How can she leverage her firm to maximize her opportunities?