

Rainmaker Q&A: Duane Morris' Matthew Taylor

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Matthew A. Taylor is vice chairman of Duane Morris LLP, chairman of the firm's trial practice group, and a member of the firm's executive committee in Philadelphia.

Taylor practices in the area of commercial litigation, handling matters in state and federal courts across the United States. He also represents corporate boards and individual corporate officers and directors in internal and government investigations and related proceedings. Taylor deals with matters in banking and securities law, Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, corporate governance, commercial real estate, computer software and hardware, and product liability — with a concentration in medical devices, representing medical device manufacturers nationally in product liability matters and in connection with commercial disputes between the manufacturer and its distributors. He handles a wide range of employment matters involving noncompete, trade secrets and business related torts.



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Taylor is a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, and a member of the Pennsylvania and Philadelphia bar associations, the International Association of Defense Counsel and the Drug and Medical Device Committee of the Defense Research Institute. Taylor is listed in Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business in general commercial litigation.

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

A: The most important skill is a willingness to put yourself "out there," in every sense. You have to be willing to be let down, and you have to be okay with that. You need complete confidence in yourself, your firm and the talents of your firm. Most people are afraid to put themselves out there.

Secondly, you cannot be afraid to *ask*. The difference between rainmakers and nonrainmakers is the willingness to ask for work. The skill is being comfortable, being direct and being able to communicate clearly and concisely why your firm is the best for the job. Long pitches and lengthy brochures don't do it. A concise, precise attack usually wins the day.

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

A: Find out as much as you can about the people you are going to meet, not just the company they work for. Be prepared for what you can bring to the table in terms of talents and skill sets. Find out what makes them tick and find out who they are using as lawyers now. In particular, find out areas where your firm is *not* suitable, and admit that. Maybe you just don't have the horses in a particular practice area or a

particular region to be useful to them. Admit that; it makes it clear that you are candid and credible.

Returning to the individuals, find out who they are, what they know, where they came from and what makes them tick. Know everything and anything about the company you are pitching. Go beyond what Dunn & Bradstreet says; learn as much as you can about their background and about the company. If it's a public company, learn as much as you can about the background of the board members and where they came from. Every company always has to play to the issue of "What is the Board going to think?" Find out the Board members' backgrounds, and you can play that knowledge into the pitch.

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

A: Starting in 1999, we began to court a large high-tech company with international operations. The company had very strong institutional relationships with another major law firm. We started with some very small work, billings in low five figures a year for six years. We realized at the outset that the sales cycle was going to take a really long time, and we didn't reach our current level of extensive work for some 15 years. We were just in one small area, and now we do Employee Retirement Income Security Act work, real estate, tax, IP litigation and commercial litigation.

They always knew we were good lawyers, but it took the in-house lawyers a long time to convince their higher ups that we were the right firm for them. The in-house lawyers couldn't easily displace the other firm. In the meantime, we went out of our way to sponsor charities and causes that we knew they cared about. It was a good six years before we got anything more than the small area we started with. Now they are one of the firm's biggest clients.

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

A: Your career begins your first day of law school. Pay attention to your network. The people you know in high school, college, civic associations and your religious groups all count. Pay attention to your network and stay connected from the beginning. It's not going to work to reach out to them years after you last saw them; you need to be in touch.

You should have three to five things on your calendar every month before the month starts, whether it's a breakfast, a lunch, a bar association meeting, etc. They must be on your calendar before the month starts or you'll never do it.

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

A: It's having the time to stay with it. The biggest excuse lawyers have is: "I'm too busy with my practice and keeping up my billable hours." The biggest challenge is to be disciplined and see to it that you set time aside to network and to make rain, or you are not going to be a rainmaker for very long. The awareness of staying competitive and not taking your clients for granted is crucial. The people giving out the work from the company you work for are under incredible pressure from above — "What's in it for us?" they hear all the time. "What are our lawyers doing for us?" You have to answer that question about *your* firm.

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