



## How Women Can Become Effective Rainmakers *Peggy S. Bud, Founder, Speaking Skillfully*

Rainmakers are considered successful professionals who know how to build and maintain relationships. They understand the importance of developing and nurturing successful connections. They know these connections may lead to business opportunities. The term “rainmaker” actually comes from the American Indian culture. In that culture, rainmakers were the people who “followed rituals in order to get rain to fall.” They were needed and respected individuals because without rain, the entire culture might not survive.

In the corporate world, rainmakers help businesses grow and flourish. How do professionals become rainmakers? Why are there so few female rainmakers? Even though about 50% of any law school’s graduating class is female, only about 4% of the managing partners in the top 200 U.S. law firms are women and even fewer are rainmakers.

The art of rainmaking begins with being an effective communicator and being able to successfully build relationships. In theory, this is a woman’s strength. Women communicate to build relationships and enhance social connections, whereas men communicate to gather information or to solve problems. So why are women less likely to become rainmakers?

One problem women face is that rainmakers often inherit their book of business from their mentors. Yet, women are less likely to be chosen to be mentored by senior partners, who have historically been white males. These men tend to want to mentor people who remind them of themselves.

Unlike men who are quick to jump in and request various opportunities, women wait to be asked. Socially, women wait to be asked on a first date; professionally they are less likely to advocate for themselves and tout their accomplishments. Being a self-advocate is a great way to gain exposure. It can open opportunities to meet and develop relationships with prospective clients.

Hopefully as firms hire more women, there will be more female mentors, which will lead to more female rainmakers. Most young lawyers aren’t as lucky as Martha McGarry, the first woman to become a partner at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. The story goes when she joined the firm a more senior partner invited her to join *him* at a meeting with a potential client. At the end of the meeting, he told the client he was leaving the firm.

He suggested they continue their conversation with Martha and so began a 15-year client relationship. But this scenario doesn't often happen.

In order to become a rainmaker, you must be a great networker. This takes practice and a conscious effort. Innately women have many of the skills needed to be successful networkers. They do it in their personal life. Which store sells the best produce? Who is the best pediatrician? Where can they get their clothes tailored? What movie should they see on Saturday night? And the questions continue. Being able to network in order to identify the best places to go or the best service providers comes more easily to women and is how they build their circle of friends.

Matt Bud, Chairman of The Financial Executives Networking Group, refers to three types of networking: staying in touch with your friends, meeting new friends, and introducing your friends to each other. Each of these networking situations helps build and maintain relationships. These situations also build a body of resources which may turn into business opportunities.

Women tend to network outside of the office; using friends, colleagues, and acquaintances to build their professional network. Sometimes this presents a problem at work. Why? Some firms frown upon networking outside of the office because the hours aren't billable. On the other hand, some businesses are more open, recognizing the value of networking in all venues. Technology also makes it easier to reach out to people near and far. Sending notes, making phone calls, texting, or using any type of social media are great ways to stay in touch with colleagues and old friends.

Women leaders should recognize their communication style is different from their male counterparts. This difference may impact how they are understood by colleagues, customers, or potential clients. Women who want to succeed tend to work harder; yet their motivation to be successful can be perceived as aggressive. When a man displays the same behavior, his actions are seen in a positive light. He is considered to be assertive and a leader. When women act aggressive or assertive, they may be called derogatory terms. A negative spin is often attached to their behavior.

In order to be seen as a leader and a probable rainmaker, it is important to send clear verbal and non-verbal messages. Speak with confidence! Be a great listener! Show clients how much you care. A woman's communication style can be misconstrued. Therefore, it is important for them to let others know their goals related to serving clients, bringing in business and contributing to the profitability of the firm.

Women are great team players. Being open to collaborating with colleagues is a great way to build relationships. By making rainmaking a team process the "competition" becomes reframed as "the group's success." Both women and men bring their expertise to the table using their unique talents to "woo" the client and build and maintain a

relationship. This leads to great rainmaking teams, and women can easily be the leaders of these teams!

### **About Peggy**

*Peggy Bud, founder of Speaking Skillfully is a certified speech-language pathologist. She teaches her clients how to effectively communicate when interacting with customers, clients and colleagues. Communication is a company's most powerful tool and will directly impact the company's bottom line. **It's more than what you say; it's how you say it.** Peggy can be reached at [Peggy@PeggyBud.com](mailto:Peggy@PeggyBud.com) or via telephone 203.952.8534. Learn more at her web site: [www.PeggyBud.com](http://www.PeggyBud.com)  
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