

## Rainmaker Q&A: White And Williams' Maulin Vidwans

*Law360, New York (August 27, 2013, 3:38 PM ET)* -- Maulin S. Vidwans is a partner in White and Williams LLP's Philadelphia office and chairman of the firm's business department. He has experience in all aspects of corporate finance, real estate and business transactions. For more than 20 years, Vidwans has handled a variety of complex commercial and real estate finance transactions, involving mergers, acquisitions, leveraged buyouts and rollup financing, cash flow and asset-based financing, syndicated loan financing, acquisition financing, construction and development financing, and resort and timeshare financing.

Recently, he was counsel for the agent and lead lender in a multimillion-dollar syndicated receivables loan financing matter to a public company timeshare resort developer that involved more than 60 timeshare projects in 10 different states. He currently serves as a board member of the Committee of Seventy and the Risk Management Association (Philadelphia Chapter), and is a trustee of the Walnut Street Theatre.

### **Q: How did you become a rainmaker?**

A: Becoming a successful "rainmaker" was truly a learned art that I continue to practice and refine to this day. My education in this art form started with several senior colleagues who were willing to involve me in their marketing efforts at a young age, and I was able to learn from them and develop my own style. I believe one of the most important lessons that I learned was to truly listen to your clients' needs and not be afraid to ask for their work at the appropriate time.

I became a "rainmaker" as my relationships grew and strengthened together with my legal acumen over many years. An example that I enjoy sharing is that my first deal that I ever documented was with a client that is now the regional market president of a major national banking association. However, when we first started working together he was as assistant vice president and I was a first-year associate and we were working on pieces of a deal for our more senior colleagues. It wasn't until many years later that he was able to engage me for a deal where he was the primary decision maker and I was the responsible attorney. Today, I see many of my younger colleagues expect to get business from one lunch or one ball game and then get frustrated. I sometimes smile, knowing that I have spent numerous hours, weeks, months and years with many decision makers before they entrusted me with their first deal.

Although most lawyers do not view themselves as salesmen, I truly believe that a successful rainmaker understands and appreciates that they not only need to be technically sound, but also in touch with the businesses and business professionals that they counsel on a day-to-day basis. As a corporate finance attorney, my clients expect that I understand their business and goals. One of the ways I fulfill that expectation is by spending many hours reading the headlines, stories and trends that affect my clients, their competition and the economic climate in which they operate.

**Q: How do you stay a rainmaker?**

A: Staying a rainmaker is truly more challenging than becoming a rainmaker. In today's economic environment and competitive climate, it's essential to adapt the way we practice and market our work. As a result of the narrowing of the deal flow pipeline over the past several years, many law firms and lawyers that historically did not solicit your clients or practice in your market or segment have become much more active and engaged in seeking to develop new business opportunities. With less deal activity, there is more competition and we all must work harder and smarter than in the past to be successful in what may be the "new normal."

As I tell many of my colleagues, the easy part of my job is the "9-5 workday." In order to stay relevant, a rainmaker must also continue to attend the breakfasts, lunches, dinners, ball games, golf outings, meetings and conventions so as to touch more people, build new relationships and continue to foster the ones created on the way to becoming a rainmaker. When attending all of these events, it's important to remember that some people hire law firms, but most hire a specific lawyer because of relationships they have built and cultivated. For the past 20 years, I've networked and created relationships with people — many of whom have become my clients. However, I'm most proud of the fact that many of my clients have become my personal friends.

**Q: What advice would you give to an aspiring rainmaker?**

A: The most important thing an aspiring rainmaker needs to understand and appreciate is that the art of developing business is more often an extenuated process and not an immediate outcome. One of the many lessons that I have learned is that trust and confidence by a client in their professionals are built over time and not overnight. It is important for an aspiring rainmaker to understand that they should seek to market to their peers and strengthen relationships. This dedication will eventually pay off when those connections are in a position to direct business. Investing in these meaningful relationships over time will positively influence those decisions.

I once had a senior partner advise me that I should not have any friends that couldn't offer me additional business. Luckily, I left that firm, but I do understand his message, although I believe his viewpoint was myopic. I would also suggest that aspiring rainmakers join and participate in activities or organizations in which their clients have interests and learn about their businesses and the challenges they face. Specifically, I always encourage my younger colleagues to join, and more importantly, participate in, various bar and trade organizations related to their practice and seek board membership

opportunities in nonprofits that may be of personal interest to them. As a business lawyer, my clients have told me on many occasions that they truly appreciate my legal counsel, but they are also impressed that I have taken the time to visit their businesses to learn why the decisions they are making are important to their success.

**Q: Tell us a tale of landing a big client.**

A: A recent client success story truly epitomizes my belief that marketing and rainmaking is a process, but one worth pursuing. As a young attorney, I had the benefit of working with a more senior partner on a niche practice area — timeshare resort development and financing transactions on a national and international basis. While working in that area, I was fortunate to get to know and befriend a woman that was a rising star that worked for our client, a national finance company headquartered in the Northeast. We worked on many projects over the years that involved acquisition, construction and development, and receivables financing of golf course and timeshare resort projects throughout the country.

After several years, I learned this woman was taking some time off to raise her children and pursue other job opportunities. Nevertheless, I continued to keep in touch with her through industry events and conventions and I would make sure to call or write to her from time to time to inquire about her growing family.

Six months ago, I had the good fortune to represent a current client as agent's and lead lender's counsel on a multimillion-dollar timeshare financing that involved numerous co-lenders and counsels. It was to my great surprise that I learned that my past client contact was involved in that transaction and in the process of moving out to a western-based national bank to establish and develop a national timeshare finance lending practice for her new employer. This story came full circle this past week as she engaged me to do a several hundred million dollar construction, development and receivables financing for her new employer.

*The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the firm, its clients, or Portfolio Media Inc., or any of its or their respective affiliates. This article is for general information purposes and is not intended to be and should not be taken as legal advice.*

All Content © 2003-2013, Portfolio Media, Inc.