

# The Virtual Lawyer



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# Contents

Executive summary.....	v
About the author.....	ix
<b>Part 1: React</b>	
Chapter 1: How to keep doing effective business development while we can't meet in person.....	
Chapter 2: How to continue to develop your principal relationships virtually ..	
Chapter 3: How to penetrate new markets virtually.....	
Chapter 4: Practical planning: How to create an effective 30-day plan .....	
<b>Part 2: Refresh</b>	
Chapter 5: Adapt, improvise, overcome – adopting a more flexible approach to marketing and BD .....	
Chapter 6: Formulating a personal BD plan that combines the best of the old with the best of the new.....	
Chapter 7: The perfect opportunity to refresh the way you do business .....	
Chapter 8: Refreshing the four pillars of your firm.....	
Chapter 9: Practical planning: How to create an effective 90 day plan.....	

**Part 3: Return**

Chapter 10: What do we know about the future? .....

Chapter 11: How can we prepare our return to the future?.....

Chapter 12: And finally.....

Chapter 13: Practical planning: How to create an effective 12-month plan ..

# Executive summary

It is of course an understatement to say our lives have changed massively since the end of March 2020. The restrictions that have had to be brought in to control COVID-19 saw almost all of us forced to work from home, only connected to our colleagues and clients by Teams, Zoom, and Facetime.

At the time it looked like this was going to be a six-month blip. We'd ride it out then things would start to go back to normal and we could carry on as we were.

We all now know that is definitely not the case. As I started writing this book in late October 2020 we had started to see a slight return to the office – albeit in shifts to maintain the required social distancing – and face-to-face meetings over coffee or lunch were starting to creep back in. However, it now looks as though in the short-term at least the restrictions will get tighter before they relax again.

But you know all this. What does it have to do with business development?

Way back in March, a lot of law firms pushed business development to the bottom of their priorities. Work had to come first. And, as we can't do business development the way we always have, there was no way to keep it going even if we wanted to.

The only problem is, if you don't do any business development, you are not going to generate the new work required to sustain your practice. You are also going to put yourself at high risk of losing the client relationships you have worked so hard to build. This meant we had to quickly come up with new ways to do business development from home. We had to adapt our approach by using the tools that were available to us. We had to replace physical business development with virtual business development.

*The Virtual Lawyer* examines those new virtual ways of approaching marketing and business development, explaining how you can continue to strengthen your existing relationships, boost your visibility in the

markets you serve, and generate the new introductions and new opportunities you'll need to grow your practice whilst working remotely.

The book uses a three-step model, designed to take us from where we are today to where we need to be in the future, whatever that future ends up looking like. These three steps are React, Refresh, and Return.

### **React**

What do lawyers need to do to react to the new restrictions, new working environment, and new client demands? How can you adapt your personal BD plan to circumvent the current restrictions? Most importantly, it looks at the practical ways to network and build your profile virtually by using what you have available – your laptop, tablet, and smartphone. This stage will be supplemented with tips on how to create and maintain an ongoing 30-day personal BD plan.

### **Refresh**

Once your virtual business development is up and running, how do you make sure your plan is capable of making the best of the current situation? How can you become more flexible in your approach by starting to reintroduce more traditional BD activities while continuing to take full advantage of the new virtual activities you introduced while working remotely?

This stage is supported by tips on how to create and maintain an ongoing 90-day personal BD plan.

### **Return**

Eventually things will go back to something close to normal. At that point you need to be completely “BD-ready” so you stay close to your clients and contacts and, just as importantly, one step ahead of your competitors. We will look at what you need to do to prepare for the future. What will our personal BD plans look like? This stage looks at how we balance the demands of client development, leveraging our professional networks, and winning new clients and/or breaking into new markets by creating an approach that will work in what is likely to be a hybrid of office and home working.

This stage is supported by tips on how to create and implement an effective new 12-month BD plan.

However the current pandemic plays out, your commercial future will rely on your ability to keep generating new work as a lawyer, as a department, and as firm. These three steps have been designed to help you do that virtually.

You will learn the skills you'll need to continue to build your practice even during times when meetings, events, and hospitality aren't possible. You'll be able to utilize the technology you have to hand to stay as accessible and responsive as you always have been, while you identify and progress new opportunities from your desk.

Regardless of how or where you have to work at any given time, you will be ready to operate as a Virtual Lawyer.





## About the author

**Douglas McPherson** has had a long career in marketing and business development within professional services. For the last ten years he has been a director of Size 10½ Boots Ltd, a specialist BD agency that works solely with law firms, accountants, intellectual property firms, and barristers' chambers, helping them find smarter, easier, and more effective ways to grow their practice. This book brings a lot of his most recent experience together, most specifically in terms of finding ways for clients to adapt their marketing and BD so they can continue to grow despite the current restrictions and a tough and uncertain trading environment.