Client Relationships

Professional Development Workshop Series
The Essentials

NEW YORK
CITY BAR

Presented By

Diana Hird

February 12, 2009
8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

This program is made possible through the generosity of sponsoring law firms and The New York Law Journal.

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This program will fulfill 1.5 practice management credits of the NY MCLE requirement.
This program provides transitional and non-transitional credits for all attorneys, including those who are newly admitted (less than 24 months).

Client Relationships

Professional Development Workshop Series

NEW YORK
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By Diana Hird

Introduction

Around your third year as a law firm Associate, once you've mastered Lexis-Nexis, redlining and the ins and outs of the word processing department, you begin to think about the next step in your career: client contact. It is what you envisioned when you decided to become a lawyer; what you asked for when you interviewed with your firm; and what you aspired to while running those Lexis-Nexis searches in your junior Associate years. Your aspirations are no surprise: client counseling is at the very core of what it means to be lawyer. And now that you've mastered your legal research, writing and contract drafting skills, you feel ready to counsel clients about everything you know. But is it enough to have knowledge and understanding of the law to be a good client advisor?

Around your third or fourth year, a partner at your firm entrusts you with your first solo client meeting. The partner might ask you to help a client understand the latest revisions to a purchase agreement or to prepare a witness for a deposition. You know the facts, the law, the arguments. You've sat in on countless meetings run by partners. You are nervous but you feel prepared. And then the day comes and there is a human being before you and she is not happy to be there, or to see you instead of the partner, or to accept your point of view. You try to be polite but you feel she is walking all over you. All your knowledge and understanding of the law is falling by the wayside because you can't connect with this person.

Connecting with a client is what it takes to become an effective client advisor. It is a skill in and of itself, independent of intellectual ability. Like any skill, it must be learned. For some of us the skill comes more easily than for others. But even those of us that have a natural affinity for client counseling tend to do better with some clients than with others. We might have the skill to calm down an angry client but lack the skill to focus a distracted client. We might be able to nurture a nervous client but be uncomfortable taking a stern posture with lackadaisical client.

Connecting with a client requires that you play a character like an actor in a play. What role you play depends on the situation and your client. If you are preparing a client for a deposition and your client is nervous, you might choose to play the role of a nurturing parent. If your client believes he doesn't need a preparation session for his deposition, you might play the role of a stern parent. Each situation demands a different performance. Most of us have a limited repertoire of performances we feel comfortable presenting. Many younger attorneys are uncomfortable playing the stern parent to an older client. Other attorneys are uncomfortable dealing with a client's show of emotion. We all have our own points of discomfort and our zones of comfort. However, in life as in the practice of law, we cannot limit our interactions to situations that fit within our own comfort zones. For this reason, we need to expand our repertoire of roles. That is precisely what this course is about.

My mention of theater in this introduction is not just as a metaphor. I introduce the idea of theater because the techniques that we will learn in this workshop are based on techniques that theater actors use to prepare themselves for acting roles. When I bring up acting techniques, I am not referring to presentation skills you would use for public appearances. I am also not advocating insincerity or lack of authenticity. I am referring instead to the acting skills of *active listening* and *responsiveness*. These are the skills that allow us to interact beyond our comfort zones, and allow us to handle interpersonal situations that are not easy.

We've all heard the terms *active listening* and *responsiveness* before. We talk about the ideals of *active listening* and *responsiveness* all the time. But do we really know what they mean? Unfortunately, most of us only have a vague sense of what they mean. That is because we typically speak of these concepts as one set of rules that fit all: make eye contact, lean forward, precede each disagreement with "I get what you're saying, but…" Alas, it's not that simple. Active Listening is a way of feeling out a situation with all your senses. You hear what another person says, the tone of their voice; you see their facial expressions, their gestures, their posture. And from this you assess what is really being communicated. That is *active listening*.

The next step after *active listening* is *responsiveness*. Very often, we fully assess what someone is trying to communicate but we ignore it. Hence the expression, "the elephant in the room". We do this for any number of reasons: in some cases because we are afraid to cause a confrontation, in other cases because we are afraid of saying something that will make us look stupid. Whatever the specific reason, we can generalize that we don't respond to the elephant in the room out of some sort of fear of how our actions will impact another person.
We'll explore *active listening* and *responsiveness* in this course. We will do this ultimately by role-playing some client relationship scenarios and talking about what works and what doesn't work in the performances we see.

Part I: Learning How to Role-Play

Audience watches pre-scripted role-play. Two actors play the roles of client and advisor, respectively. Audience members comment on what went wrong and what went right. Audience suggests adjustments to actors. Actors replay scene as an improvisation using audience suggestions. Facilitator debriefs.

Guidelines on How to Provide Constructive Comments on a Role-Play:

- Comment on how the client reacted to particular statements made by advisor
    - Focus on body language cues
    - Focus on specific statements made by client
    - Was the client impacted strongly (negatively/positively) by particular statements made by advisor?
- Describe the quality of the relationship. Did it improve or deteriorate as the conversation progressed?
- Describe the advisor's communication style
    - Pace of speech
    - High energy/low energy
    - Clarity of explanations
- Describe the client's communication style
- Were the styles complementary?
- Suggest some adjustments for re-play

Part II: Participant Role-Plays

Participants volunteer to role-play advisory role with one of the actors using a given scenario. Discussion will follow format described above. Three role-plays will be conducted.

Part III: Debrief:

Post- Course Take-Away Workbook Exercises

Communication Style. Do you have a sense of your communication style? Did you make any discoveries about your communication style during the course? What types of personalities do you deal with well/poorly? What personality types make you impatient? What could you do to improve your ability to communicate with a broader spectrum of personalities?

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Awareness. How aware are you of your impact on your listener? What can you do to heighten that awareness?

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Resistance. Think of one example where a client was showing resistance to you personally or to your advice. Think of one example where you were resisting a client. How did it feel to have someone resist you? Did it make you angry? Are you surprised by how you felt? If you look back on the situation, were your feelings in proportion to the situation or outsized? Did your feelings get in the way of your objectives for the conversation? When you were the resistor, was your resistance outsized or fully warranted? In each case, did the relationship improve/stay the same/deteriorate as the interaction progressed? What tools/tactics can are helpful in overcoming resistance?

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Surprise. Think of one example where you were having a client conversation and you were thrown a curve-ball . How did you feel: Defensive? Panicked? Angry? How did you react: Point the finger? Deer in Headlights? Apologetic? Did you react impulsively? How did your reaction impact the relationship? How comfortable are you dealing with surprise? Can you change course easily or do you resist?

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Some Tips for Improving Interpersonal Communications with Clients:

- Notice whether your client’s body language has shifted. This may indicate an unexpressed reaction to something you said.
- When your client says one thing but his/her body language suggests the opposite, tell your client what you noticed in his/her demeanor as a way of getting at the client’s true feelings.
- Check in with your client frequently to assess whether you are on the same page.
- Do not assume that because your client is giving you eye contact that he/she understands what you are saying.
- Evaluate whether you have established a common ground/common language with your client. Consider whether you are assuming the client has knowledge of the law that in fact the client does not.
- Consider if it is appropriate or helpful to stray from the agenda for a moment of empathy. Do not ignore emotional content in your client’s communication with you.
- Take account of your own communication style and consider if an adjustment is necessary in a particular situation (i.e., you are a fast talker, and your client is a fast talker, and you’re both fast-talking over each other; or you tend to lecture and your client needs an interactive conversation to stay attentive).
- Allow your client to explore the issues for him/herself. You may see the issues clearly but your client still needs to get there. Guide your client through this exploration.
- Avoid contradicting your client. Instead, use exploration to broaden your client’s perspective.
- Balance the need to establish respect for yourself with the need to respect your client.
- Don’t be afraid of silences. Your client may be working up to telling you something difficult.

Take-Away Exercise: Communicating Via Email.

In-person communication is not the only challenge. Communicating via email can also either strengthen or hurt a relationship. Take the following example. How would you respond?

You are in-house counsel at market research firm X. Your internal client says the following: "I have this great opportunity for a very profitable deal. We will market Firm Y's service and they will market our service. Let's just leave out of the contract the specifics of how we'll market each other's stuff and also leave out how we will compensate each other. Let's make all that "subject to future negotiation". And let's make it exclusive: they can't enter into agreements with our competitors and visa versa." Let's say your position is that drafting something would be a waste of time. There are no financial terms and no specifics so why bother putting a contract together. Plus, exclusivity provisions are not taken lightly at your company and are reserved for the most highly profitable transactions. How would you communicate this to your client in a way that would preserve your relationship and let your client save face? Do a first draft and at least two re-writes.

<u>Debrief Questions</u>:

How many re-writes did you do? How different was your approach in your first draft and in your last draft? Do you typically give this much thought to form over substance of your email communications?

Download The PDF:

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Stop Trying to Close the Sale

Sustaining Client Relationships: Commercial Lender As Trusted Advisor

Are You Client-Focused, Or A Client

Trust in Business: The Core Concepts

By Charles H. Green

Trust relationships are vital to the conduct of business. Some base level of trust is required just to have employment contracts, or to engage in commercial transactions. Beyond such minimum thresholds, trust also plays a major role.

The level of trust in business relationships—whether external, e.g. in sales or advisory roles, or internal, e.g. in a services function—is a greater determinant of success than anything else, including content excellence.

How can we think about trust? What conceptual frameworks do we need in order to intelligently assess and improve on trust relationships, and in particular on our levels of trustworthiness?

This article lays out the core trust models I have developed and adopted over the years. They are taken from The Trusted Advisor (with Maister and Galford, Free Press, 2000), and Trust-based Selling (McGraw-Hill, 2006). There are three.

1. The Trust Equation: a deconstructive, analytical model of the components of trustworthiness;

2. The Trust Creation Process: a process model of trust creation through personal interaction—mainly conversations;

3. The Trust Principles: four principles, or values, which serve as guides to decision-making and conduct to increase trust.

The Trust Equation

Vulture?

Why Your Sales Process Matters Less Than The Psychology Of Selling

Don’t Treat Clients Like Competitors! The Four Principles Of Trust-Based Selling

Create Trust, Gain a Client

The Business Case For Trust

Metrics and Trust

Scandals and the Backlash Against Trust

Profitability in Professional Services

Build Trust Into Your Selling

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Competing With Your Customers: Where Strategy Goes Wrong

Differentiation Through Selling, Not Branding

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Leadership, Trust and Intangible Services

Do Clients Buy the Law Firm, or the Lawyer?

Clients, Values and Guiding Principles

Trust is a bi-lateral relationship—one trusts, and the other is the trusted. While the two are related, they’re not the same thing. The trust equation is a model for the second—the one who would be trusted. It is about trustworthiness.

Often we intend more than one thing when we use the word trust. We use it to describe what we think of what people say. We also use it to describe behaviors. We use it to describe whether or not we feel comfortable sharing certain information with someone else. And we use the same word to indicate whether or not we feel other people have our interests at heart, vs. their own interests.

Those four variables can be described as Credibility, Reliability, Intimacy, and Self-Orientation. They can be combined in an equation.

The Trust Equation

$$T = \frac{C + R + I}{S}$$

Credibility has to do with the words we speak. In a sentence, we might say, “I can trust what she says about intellectual property; she is very credible on the subject. By contrast, reliability has to do with actions. We might say, for example, “If he says he’ll deliver the product tomorrow, I trust him, because he’s dependable.”

Intimacy refers to the safety or security that we feel when entrusting someone with something. We might say, “I can trust her with that information; she’s never violated my confidentiality before, and she would never embarrass me.”

Self-orientation refers to the focus of the person in question. In particular, whether the person’s focus is primarily on himself or herself or on the other person. We might say, “I can’t trust him on this deal—I don’t think he cares enough about me, he’s focused on what he gets out of the deal.” Or—more commonly—“I don’t trust him—I think he was too concerned about how he was appearing, so he wasn’t really paying attention.”

Increasing the value of the factors in the numerator increases the value of trust. Increasing the value of the denominator—that is, self-orientation—decreases the value of trust.

Since there is only one variable in the denominator and three in the numerator, the most important factor is self-orientation. This is intentional. A seller with low self-orientation is free to really, truly, honestly focus on the customer. Not for his own sake, but for the sake of the customer. Such a focus is rare among salespeople (or people in general, for that matter).

Looking at trust this way covers most of the common meanings of trust that we encounter in everyday business interactions. Note that the meanings are almost entirely

[Client Satisfaction Surveys: Yea or Nay?]

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[Selling by Doing, not Selling by Telling]

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[Ten Myths About Selling Intangible Services]

personal, not institutional.

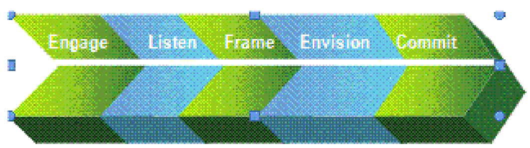
People don't primarily trust institutional entities, they trust other people. The components of credibility and reliability are sometimes used to describe companies or Websites, but at least as often to describe people. The other components—intimacy and self-orientation—are almost entirely about people.

Trust in selling requires good "scores" on all four variables in the equation. But the most important, by far, is low levels of self-orientation.

Living the four trust values is the best way to increase your trustworthiness.

The Trust Creation Process

Trust typically gets created at the individual level, between people, and usually in conversations. The Trust Creation Process is a five-step model for that process:



1. Engage the client in an open discussion about issues that are key to the client;

2. Listen to what is important and real to the client; earn the right to offer solutions;

3. Frame the true root issue, without the language of blame, via caveats, problem statements and hypotheses; take personal risks to explore sensitive issues—articulate a point of view; create by giving away;

4. Envision an alternate reality, including win-win specific descriptions of outcomes and results, including emotional and political states; clarify benefits—make clear what's at stake; be tangible about future states;

5. Commit to actionable next steps that imply significant commitment and movement on the part of each party.

The order in which these sentences occur in a conversation has as much impact as the sentences themselves. That is, you could do a wonderful job on framing the issue or on the commitment to action—but if you do them before you do listening, then the trust process breaks down, or freezes. This becomes clearer when we translate the trust creation process into a sales context, as follows:

Engage: I hear X may be an issue for you—is that right?

Listen: Gee, that's interesting; tell me more; what's behind that?

Frame: It sounds like what you may have here is a case of Q.

Envision: How will things look three years from now if we fix this?

Commit: What if we were to do Z?

The most powerful step in the Trust Creation Process by far is the Listening step. The two most common errors in practice are:

a. Inadequate listening, and
b. Jumping too quickly to the final, action, step.

The Trust Principles

Being or becoming trustworthy cannot be reduced to pure behaviors. You can't bottle it in a competency model. Our actions are driven by our beliefs, and our beliefs are driven by our values or principles. Trustworthy behavior is way too complex to fake without the beliefs and values behind them. If your values don't drive you to behave in a trustworthy manner all the time, you'll be found out quickly.

Hence, the Trust Equation and the way we use the Trust Creation Process model are really just outcomes of the principles we hold. The way to become trusted is to act consistently from those principles—and not just any set of principles will do. There are four specific principles governing trustworthy behavior:

1. A *focus on the Other* (client, customer, internal co-worker, boss, partner, subordinate) for the Other's sake, not just as a means to one's own ends.

We often hear "client-focus," or "customer-centric." But these are terms all-too-often framed in terms of economic benefit to the person trying to be trusted.

2. A *collaborative* approach to relationships.

Collaboration here means a willingness to work together, creating both joint goals and joint approaches to getting there.

3. A *medium to long term* relationship perspective, not a short-term transactional focus.

Focus on relationships nurtures transactions;

but focus on transactions chokes off relationships. The most profitable relationships for both parties are those where multiple transactions over time are assumed in the approach to each transaction.

4. A habit of being *transparent* in all one's dealings.

Transparency has the great virtue of helping recall who said what to whom. It also increases credibility, and lowers self-orientation, by its willingness to keep no secrets.

Applying these principles to all of our actions will develop the fullest possible sort of trusting relationship.

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Article No. 2
Role-Playing to Improve Communication Skills: A Case Study

Following is a case study based on an actual coaching session in which a mid-level law firm Associate learns to prepare a difficult client for an upcoming deposition. This particular case study demonstrates how a simple physical adjustment can create a dramatic improvement in an Associate's presence and control during his meeting with a client.

The coaching session is divided into three parts: (1) role-play of witness preparation; (2) feedback; (3) re-do of role-play. Involved in the session are: (1)Karl (a fictitious name), a 2nd year Litigation Associate at a top-10 national law firm; and (2) Diana Hird, the coach, who acts alternately as the witness in the role-play and as the coach outside the role-play, and will be referred to alternately as Witness and Coach depending on her function at that time.

Initial Assessment:

Before beginning the role-play, Coach observes Karl speaking to a colleague and notices Karl's fast-paced speech pattern and frequent furtive glances to his Blackberry. Immediately, Coach predicts that Karl's internal pace will be his greatest obstacle to communicating with the Witness.

Role-Play:

The Coach considers two approaches to her role-play with Karl: (1) play a Witness that functions at a faster pace than Karl; or (2) play a Witness that functions at a pace that is significantly slower than Karl's. Either choice will create an obstacle to interpersonal communication and consequently, a learning experience for Karl.

Coach chooses to play a character that is faster-paced than Karl. The role-play begins as follows:

Witness: (*typing into Blackberry*) I have 20 minutes for this prep so don't worry about the niceties.

Karl: Actually we have a lot to cover, I don't know if …….

Witness: Son, I have a company to run; I have a lot of experience and I don't need to be babied. Just give me the gist and I'll see you there next week.

Karl: Ok. (*speaking quickly*) The set-up will be that I'll sit next to you; opposing counsel will sit across from ………

Witness: Come on kid, don't waste my time. (*tapping the watch on his raised wrist for effect*) Give me the exec summary.

Karl: (*speaking at the speed of light*) Their theory of the case will be that you had gotten the information from George before you sold your shares and our theory is that you sold the shares at that time because you were ……(*continues to speak for four minutes without taking a breath or interacting with the Witness).*

Observations During Role-Play:

During the above role-play, Coach observes the following physical manifestations in Karl:

- Both fists are tightly clenched
- He is leaning far forward in his chair
- He is facing Witness straight-on
- His eyes are locked on the Witness' eyes
- He is breathless

Examining Role-Play:

Coach steps back from the role-play and initiates the debrief session with Karl.

Coach: What percentage of words spoken during the role-play were yours?

Karl: I spoke most of the time. 80%.

Coach: Who controlled the meeting?

Karl: I tried to.

Coach: How did you try to control the meeting?

Karl: By talking as fast as I could so I could get through my agenda.

Coach: Did it work?

Karl: Well, I got you to stop complaining about the time.

Coach: True. What was your purpose in meeting with me?

Karl: To prepare you.

Coach: Was I listening to what you said?

Karl: I don't think so.

Coach: How do you know?

Karl: Your eyes looked spaced out.

Coach: Yes. And you talked so fast I have no idea what you said. Now, if I wasn't listening, did you accomplish your purpose?

Karl: No. So I guess I didn't control the meeting.

Techniques for Changing Associate's Impact on Client:

At this point, Coach prepares Karl for a re-do of the role-play. In formulating the right coaching intervention, Coach's goal is to find the smallest intervention that will yield the most improvement. While Coach is looking for Karl to make substantial changes in his approach (slowdown speech, listen better, regain composure . . .), Coach will not get Karl to make these changes by simply telling him to do so. Direct instructions would have the unwanted effect of making Karl self-conscious (am I talking slowly enough now?) and of confusing him (am I listening now?). In such a state, anxieties about "getting it right" will defeat the intended goal.

Coach therefore formulates an intervention that is intended to achieve the desired results without making Karl aware of what results he is being asked to achieve. Suggesting a physical adjustment is one way of doing this. Coach tells Karl:

- Turn at a slight angle away from Witness
- Lean back in your chair

The second role-play follows with Karl taking on the posture suggested by Coach:

Witness: I have twenty minutes for you.

Karl: (*pause*) We have a problem. (*pause*)

Witness: (*pause*) What?

Karl: (*out of natural impulse, folding his arms*) This can't be done in twenty minutes. (*pause*)

Witness: **(***annoyed but listening*) Well what do you need.

Karl: (*long pause then inspiration*) It's not what I need. It's what you need. It's the money you stand to lose if...(*stops himself as he notices Witness's physiological change*)

Witness: (*looks down at table and rubs temple… long pause, then speaking softly to herself*) Sh*t, I don't have the time for this. (*sigh*) What a mess. (*shakes head then looks up and says reluctantly*) Go on.

In this role-play, Karl is more self-possessed. As a result, he has successfully taken control from the Witness. There is a physiological explanation for Karl's change. Turning sideways and leaning back allows Karl to separate from the Witness and her concerns and simultaneously to connect to his own thoughts and perceptions. The physical change creates a parallel mental change. Karl's speech also becomes much slower and contains pauses. This change happened automatically from the simple physical adjustment. And by not telling Karl explicitly to slow down, the Coach avoided making Karl self-conscious of his speech. This approach is used frequently by theater and film directors to coax actors to develop their characters in a particular way. In fact, what Coach has done in this session is to help Karl create a particular character that will best serve him in this type of situation.

Coach: Was there a particular point where you gained control in the second role-play?

Karl: Yes. When you said "well, what do you need?"

Coach: How was that a change in control?

Karl: Just that suddenly you were asking about what I needed rather than telling me what you needed. Though it annoyed me because it's not for me. We're doing this for you. It's your case.

Coach: And you told me that. Gutsy.

Karl: Yeah. And you didn't get me fired.

Coach: No. In fact, what *was* the effect?

Karl: Your demeanor changed.

Coach: How?

Karl: You got all weird and confused.

Coach: And how did you react?

Karl: I didn't know what to do so I just stopped talking.

Coach: And what was the effect of that?

Karl: You just sort of turned yourself around somehow.

Coach: Yes. In the direction you wanted me to go. And you did this without too much effort.

Conclusion:

In the case study, Karl was asked to adjust his physicality in a way that would move his focus in a more inward direction. This adjustment was effective for him because he was initially too caught up in the Witness' antics. What is important to note is that this adjustment will not necessarily help another Associate. Another Associate might have the opposite tendency and have too much internal focus. Ironically, for such an Associate, the coaching intervention might be to ask him to sit as Karl had been sitting during Karl's initial role-play. Yet another Associate might be better served by an adjustment other than a physical adjustment. For example, in another coaching session, one Associate disclosed in passing that her mother was a college professor. In her role-play, this Associate tended to lecture the client. For her re-do, she was asked to avoid making statements and focus on asking questions. This shift was all it took for this Associate to move from an off-putting didactic style to a collaborative style of communication. This shift was accomplished without her having to be told that she was didactic.

Diana Hird is an executive coach with extensive training and experience as a coach-intervener and as a facilitator. She received a Juris Doctor from Fordham University School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts from Williams College.

Diana's coaching is influenced by her experiences as both a practicing lawyer and actor/playwright. She has received training in acting technique and improvisation and performed in Off-Off Broadway productions, film and television. Her play, *A Real Live Cuban* received Best Play, Best Director, and Best Actor awards at the 2007 Aery Theater Festival in Garrison, NY. Her play *Doing Business* received a Best Actor award and was a finalist at the 2008 Aery Theater Festival.

During her more than ten years practicing law, Diana has worked as a transactional lawyer and a manager with experience in complex technology development projects, and intellectual property licensing, including as legal counsel for The Nielsen Company, Heineken USA Incorporated and TheStreet.com, Inc., and with experience in derivatives, structured finance, mergers & acquisitions and financings as a Corporate Associate at the New York law firms Proskauer Rose, and Brown & Wood (now Sidley Austin).

Kate Haggerty, Role-Player . Kate is the founder & executive director of PowerPlays Coaching, LLC (www.powerplays-coaching.com), a company with 15 years of experience working with legal and business professionals. She is the co-creator and teacher of PowerPlays' CLE-approved performance skills course, and has performed as a witness for mock trials and depositions at law firms, including Sullivan and Cromwell, Kaye Scholer, Schulte Roth and Zabel, and Fitzpatrick Cella Harper and Scinto. She has also been an actor at programs for law schools and advocacy organizations, including the National Institute for Trial Advocacy (NITA).

She is a professional actor, with credits including Off-Broadway, national tours and regional theater stage work. She also has a diverse background backstage and off the stage, with experience in fields ranging from human resources to stage management. Backstage credits include five years with the Off-Broadway sensation Blue Man Group (NYC) and five tours with Theatreworks/USA, America's premiere children's theater company. In the corporate world, she has held positions at Conde Nast, Pfizer and Carnegie Hall, among others.

Kate served three terms on the Board of Directors of Interborough Repertory Theater (IRT), a not-for-profit NYC theater company, and the original parent company of PowerPlays. She also volunteers with the Good Dog Foundation, as part of a therapy dog team, and has visited hospitals and participated in literacy programs for children with special needs. Kate is a native of New York City, and holds a BFA in Performing Arts from Emerson College, in Boston, MA.

Beth Adler, Role-Player.

Beth Adler has worked as a corporate trainer with Performance of a Lifetime, Hird Associates and PowerPlays Coaching, LLC, coaching executives and lawyers from global investment banks, commercial banks, accounting firms and law firms, including: Deutsche Bank, Marsh, PricewaterhouseCoopers, National Institute of Trial Advocacy and Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP.

Prior to her acting and coaching career, she was a full-time lawyer with over 15 years of experience, including over 9 years at Sony Music Entertainment Inc. in various capacities, most recently as a Vice President in the legal department and as Senior Vice President, Business Affairs at Sony Classical. Prior to Sony Music, Beth was at Arista Records, Inc. and started her legal career at Cahill Gordon & Reindel.

She is a summa cum laude graduate of Princeton University, and received a joint Juris Doctor/MBA from the Northwestern University School of Law, where she was an editor on the law review, and the Kellogg Graduate School of Management. On the creative side, Beth received a certificate in film directing from New York University's School of Continuing Studies, and has the equivalent of an acting MFA, having studied Meisner technique, voice, classical movement, and Shakespearean performance (both at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London and at the American Globe Theatre in New York). She has performed a number of lead and supporting stage roles in major plays, as well as in numerous independent film and television productions. Her one woman show, 10,000 Books, is scheduled to premiere in late January, 2009.

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