

5 Daily Habits Of Rainmakers & How They Can Work For You

By **Aebra Coe**

Law360, Grand Rapids (October 17, 2017, 4:04 PM EDT) -- Everyone knows that lawyer — the one who brings in substantial business while also billing hours, mentoring associates, meeting clients for lunch, taking their kids to soccer practice and training for a marathon.

It may seem like they have a secret superpower or don't need to sleep. But as these six rainmakers reveal, it is much simpler than that — many of their efficiency-related habits can be replicated by mere humans.

Here are five tips for managing a busy schedule and bringing in business.

Make the Most of Your Commute

Chris Green is a prominent securities litigator at Ropes & Gray LLP, where he co-leads the firm's global private equity and hedge fund SEC enforcement and litigation group. He also finds time to compete in Ironman triathlons.

Green says one very simple way he maximizes his time is by commuting during off-hours, usually before rush hour, reducing his overall commute time by half an hour each way.

"One hour is a significant percentage of your waking time," he said. "That's one hour you could dedicate to fitting in a workout."

If you drive to work, the commute itself is valuable time. Kurt Steinkrauss, a partner at Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky and Popeo PC, says he uses it to fit in client phone calls.

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KURT STEINKRAUSS

Mintz Levin



Steinkrauss is chair of Mintz Levin’s closely held business group, co-chair of its private equity practice, and a member of the firm’s policy committee.

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Steinkrauss says he got the idea from his mother. She was a real estate broker when he was growing up, and she always carried with her a list of people she needed to call. As soon as cellphones became available in the 1980s, he said, she began using one in the car while driving him and his five siblings to and from school.

Today, Steinkrauss jots down his own daily list on a sticky note and clips it to a pen he keeps in his shirt pocket. When he gets into his car before and after work, he sticks it to the dashboard and connects with two or three clients each way.

Make Delegation Easy

Mayer Brown LLP partner Zachary Barnett not only tends to his own practice, but he also heads up the law firm’s fund finance practice, serves as co-head of its global lending practice, and sits on the firm’s recruiting committee.

Barnett says his trick for getting everything done in a given day is to make sure members of his team are ready to step in when he needs help.

That means engaging with them daily, he says, sometimes in informal ways such as getting lunch or coffee, or in more formal ways through training.

“I spend one hour a day, at least every day, on team building and associate training. I think that pays dividends and allows me to be more efficient because I can delegate tasks easier,” Barnett said.

Hillary Holmes, a highly successful capital markets attorney at Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, says she made a point to join a firm where she would have a strong team and associates she could trust with important work.

“When you get that, it makes it very easy to feel comfortable delegating, which is essential to managing large workloads,” said Holmes, a partner in the firm’s capital markets, energy and

infrastructure, securities regulation and corporate governance practice groups.

“My mind is really sharp in those early-morning hours. I’m only focused on the one or two tasks before me and not being interrupted by external communications. It’s quiet, and it’s a really nice way to start the day on a productive note.”

HILLARY HOLMES
Gibson Dunn



Holmes says she ensures each member of her team is informed of important developments as they work on a big transaction. She usually accomplishes this by emailing multiple members of her team almost immediately after a phone call with a client, and then following up later when she has more time to make sure the appropriate people have a clear understanding of and timeline for what they’re expected to do.

Top intellectual property attorney Teresa Lavoie, a principal at Fish & Richardson PC, goes one step further.

She says she trains administrative staff and junior attorneys to create more time in her busy day by having them treat client emails as a “one-stop shop” on a given matter. In practice, that means an email will contain all of the material and information a recipient needs to understand a matter fully.

“That way you don’t have to dig through emails or files. You want to be able to jump in with the information you need and move the ball forward,” Lavoie said.

Early to Bed, Early to Rise

Green, the Ropes & Gray triathlete, says he’s awake when he’s sharpest and asleep at the hours where he’s otherwise the least productive — in other words, he wakes up around 5 a.m. and goes to bed by 10 p.m.

“I think what happens is people end up watching TV, being on the internet and then end up going to bed at 11:30,” Green said. “I get to bed early and get up early and get a ton done — between the time I get up and 9 a.m., I’ve already done a ton of work and gotten in a substantial workout.”

One way Green says he’s able to get to bed so early while also still having time to train for triathlons and coach his children’s sports teams is by not watching television.

Gibson Dunn’s Holmes says she follows a similar schedule, waking up at 4:30 a.m. and getting some

work done “when my head is clearest,” before meeting up with friends for a long-distance run.

“My mind is really sharp in those early-morning hours. I’m only focused on the one or two tasks before me and not being interrupted by external communications. It’s quiet, and it’s a really nice way to start the day on a productive note,” she said.

After her run, Holmes makes breakfast and eats it with her children before heading to work — all before 9 a.m. One trick she has for making it all possible is to set her running clothes out the night before and program the coffee machine so she wakes up to a fresh cup.

Prioritize Client Contact

Steinkrauss says networking is key. According to the Mintz Levin partner, he makes sure his weekly schedule includes at least three to five opportunities to connect with existing or prospective clients, but in some weeks he has as many as 10.

“When you schedule a 10 a.m. coffee and then the morning starts and you get 1,000 phone calls and emails, it can be hard,” he said. “At the same time, we need work to do. Clients don’t just call us off of the yellow pages.”

If Steinkrauss isn’t having lunch with a client, he said, he’s eating at his desk so he can get some work done and go have coffee with someone after lunch.

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ZACHARY BARNETT
Mayer Brown



Lori Cohen is a partner at Greenberg Traurig LLP. As chair of the firm’s trial practice group and its pharmaceutical, medical device and health care litigation practice, she says finding opportunities to connect with clients is important.

One way she does this is by staying abreast of the issues important to them. She creates social media and news alerts related to the client’s industry, scans those developments throughout the day with the help of associates, and then reaches out when something major happens.

“It’s an important way to keep up on what’s going on with the client and understand the client’s business and what they’re going through,” said Cohen, who also co-chairs the firm’s Atlanta litigation practice.

Another way to connect with clients is through articles and client-facing presentations. According to Mayer Brown's Barnett, he spends an hour each day writing about his client's industries or his area of law.

"Continuing to get the firm's name out and producing those kinds of thought pieces really helps with the branding of the firm in my industry," he said.

Re-Examine Your Schedule

Multitasking may seem like a time saver, but leading patent attorney and White & Case LLP partner Shamita Etienne-Cummings says she has ditched it altogether. As a result, she says, she is more efficient and accomplishes more tasks at a higher level of quality in a given day.

Whether it's a client meeting or a conversation with her 7-year-old son, the rainmaker says she strives to be singularly focused on what is in front of her.

"If I'm doing one thing, I'm completely present in that one area," said Etienne-Cummings, who is also executive partner of the firm's D.C. office.

Green says he has reimagined how he uses his electronic calendar, stepping away from scheduling tasks in half-hour or one-hour increments and instead taking a hard look at how long something will actually take. He only schedules as much time as he absolutely needs.

"If you schedule one hour or 30 minutes, I think people tend to take that long to do a task," he said, adding: "If you make an hour meeting 45 minutes four times a day, there's another hour."

Additionally, on Sunday night or Monday morning, he will look at what he has scheduled for the week and try to trim it down by "triaging" it.

"This allows me to free up several hours a day," he said. "And in several hours a day you can fill that time by coaching your kids' sports teams, pursuing an important outside interest, doing the Ironman if that's your thing. It gives you the landscape to have a balanced life."

--Editing by Mark Lebetkin and Kelly Duncan.