



## AI can't build trust

*In a tech-driven future, strong relationships remain your most valuable business asset.*



# Business development: the skill AI can't replace

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As artificial intelligence (AI) transforms the way in which professional services are provided, from automating tasks to enhancing efficiencies, roles will undoubtedly be redefined. Included in this will be a significant shift in the [value professionals offer their clients](#).

Among all these changes, though, one skill set will become even more important than ever: business development. And here's why professionals can't afford to just stick their heads in the sand and ignore the substantial upheaval AI is bringing to business operations.

## 5 reasons to enhance business development initiatives under the growing influence of AI

The “what” is being automated, so the “why” and “who” matter more

AI is increasingly capable of handling the “what”: drafting contracts, analysing data, and producing first drafts of contracts. What AI cannot do is [build trust](#), identify client needs, or create long-term relationships based on nuanced understanding.

That's where business development comes in. Professionals who can articulate their value, understand client pain points and communicate solutions effectively will stand out from the pack, even when the work product becomes more commoditised.

Clients will be even more informed and more demanding

If you thought “Doing more for less” was already prevalent, think again! AI tools are making clients savvier. They can research legal issues on their own and explore basic strategies before ever picking up the phone to you.

This raises the bar. Clients no longer just want a provider; they want a partner.

Strong business development skills help professionals move from reactive service providers to proactive advisors - those who anticipate needs, offer tailored insights and become indispensable.

## Differentiation is no longer just about expertise

With AI levelling the playing field in technical delivery, professionals must differentiate in terms of relationships, unique industry knowledge, and business acumen. Being excellent at your craft is still essential, but it's not enough on its own.

Business development helps you showcase thought leadership, cultivate your personal brand and position yourself as someone clients want to work with, not just someone who can do the job.

## Referrals and reputation will still drive growth

Even in a tech-driven AI world, people will still hire people they like to work with. Referrals, networking and reputation will remain the top ways professionals grow their practices. AI isn't replacing those channels - it's making them more critical.

Professionals who [actively build their referral networks](#), speak at events, write their own content and stay visible will continue to attract opportunities, regardless of how advanced AI tech becomes.

## Firm growth and career growth will depend on strong BD skills

Whether you're a partner, associate, sole practitioner or in-house counsel, your ability to generate business is tied directly to your career trajectory. In a future where AI handles more of the “doing”, the ability to bring in the work becomes an even more valuable skill.

## Conclusion

AI is changing the way work gets done, but not why clients choose to work with you, not yet, at least!

Trust, communication and connection will still remain critical if you want to grow your practice. And the last time I checked, these were all very human strengths.

So, in the future, more than ever before, professionals will need to treat business development not as an optional add-on, but as a core part of their skill set.

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