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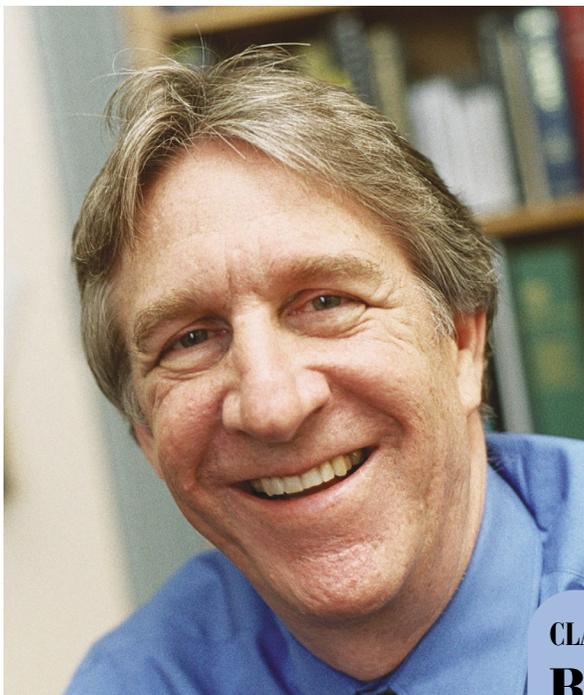
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Rainmakers

When Rob Shlachter moved to Oregon from California, he expected he'd run into a little rain. He just didn't realize he would become an expert at making it fall.



CLASS OF 2006

Rob Shlachter

Attorney and shareholder
Stoll, Stoll, Berne, Lokting
& Shlachter

Shlachter was 44 years old when, in the early 1990s, he quit a solid job in a California law firm where clients were sent to him by colleagues in a steady stream, sold a nice house and a left comfortable community life to move his family to Oregon. When he landed in Portland, he found himself taking on a job at a firm smaller than his previous one with nary a client of his own in sight.

It was then that Shlachter realized that any success he would find would have to come of his own making.

"I deliberately studied the area of law firm management and business development," he says. His search for information led him to a book by a salesman from Minnesota. The book wasn't thick

pages-wise, but it carried a wealth of information about business development and maintaining clients that Shlachter set out to make his own.

Rather than devote all of his energy to grabbing one large case, for example, he focused on earning spots on a large number of short lists, the rosters of a small number of lawyers that clients commonly draw up these days to find the best lawyer for a specific case or issue. It's a strategy he thinks would benefit almost any lawyer,

especially those at small firms. "If you're on a short life of three or four firms that a client's considering, you're going to get a share. You don't have to try to hit a homerun every time."

He also focused on writing on legal topics and speaking on topics in his area of expertise. "That's got my name out there," he says.

Then there's his daily routine of touching base, usually via email, with three or four people on his long list of acquaintances – whether or not those people are in Portland or directly related to cases he's working on. Often his short messages aren't even work related. "I'll send an interesting article I think someone might be interested in," Shlachter says. "It's a way to stay in touch. It becomes a natural thing to do, a habit like brushing your teeth."

His efforts have gained greater focus since his firm began meeting once a month with a consultant who helps Shlachter and his colleagues when it comes to following through with their rainmaking duties, which they share at the firm now.

"The biggest problem with legal firms, generally speaking, in business development is that you talk, take notes, and then nothing happens," Shlachter says. "Follow up is crucial. This is not a world anymore where you can just do the (legal) work. Everyone has to be a business developer." – *Stephanie Basalyga*