

## Rainmaker Q&A: Hangley Aronchick's Steven Miano

*Law360, New York (July 30, 2013, 12:32 PM ET)* -- Steven T. Miano is a shareholder in Hangley Aronchick Segal Pudlin & Schiller's Philadelphia office. He practices environmental law, and his clients include industrial corporations, commercial entities and municipalities.

As vice chairman of the American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy and Resources, Miano helps lead the forum for strategies and information for environmental, energy and resource lawyers.

Before entering private practice, Miano was an assistant regional counsel for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region III, Hazardous Waste Branch. He is an adjunct professor at Rutgers University Law School, where he teaches courses on environmental law.

### **Q: How did you become a rainmaker?**

A: When I was a young associate in a big Philadelphia firm, I never assumed that someone would ever suggest that I would be a "rainmaker." Rainmakers were those partners who knew everybody, who traveled in circles which gave them access to top general counsel and whose life was solely focused on attaining clients. That was, and is, not me.

What I've learned over the 25-plus years that I've practiced environmental law is that growing your legal practice centers on a few important elements: building client relationships, keeping yourself involved in your area of practice by branching out, and, perhaps most importantly, doing good work.

Client relationships are based on trust and confidence. It often takes years to build good client relationships. I've been lucky enough to have some of the same clients I represented back when I first entered private practice after leaving the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency over 22 years ago. All of them have followed me when I've had opportunities to move to other firms. Through the years, you are able to demonstrate to clients that you are interested in their business and are there to help them work through the myriad legal issues they will inevitably face. Clients don't like surprises and do like good communications.

I've also been very active in my specialized area of practice — environmental law. Over the years, I've taken the opportunity to speak and write on environmental legal issues, and I've become a leader in respected environmental organizations. Case in point — this August, I was elected as chairman-elect of the ABA Section of Environment, Energy and Resources and will become chairman of the section in August 2014. The section is the premier forum for lawyers around the country who practice in these substantive areas and has 10,000-plus members. The section is a thought leader on these issues. Keeping yourself active in such organizations is critical in growing your legal practice.

Finally, clients have to know that you will do great work for them and that you have the ability, firm support and time to handle their matters well. Clients want lawyers who think through the issues, suggest alternative approaches and follow through. I attribute my success as a lawyer to focusing on these three elements.

**Q: How do you stay a rainmaker?**

A: This is a relatively easy question, although not necessarily an easy task. Staying a rainmaker requires that you continually focus on the elements I mentioned above. It really is a long-term process. In addition, you have to look out for opportunities that present themselves and create opportunities where they may not be so obvious. I'm lucky enough to have a significant portion of my practice devoted to representing municipalities and public authorities.

Environmental law is a very specialized area of practice and most municipal solicitors simply don't have the expertise. I was therefore able to build a municipal and public authority environmental practice by building relationships with municipal solicitors. Today, I serve as special environmental solicitor to a number of municipalities and public authorities. Creating such a practice was not necessarily obvious for a big-firm lawyer 15 or so years ago. It is also a nice compliment to my practice representing large corporate clients.

While it may sound cliché, staying a rainmaker requires thinking outside the traditional box.

**Q: What advice would you give to an aspiring rainmaker?**

A: In my view, you cannot assume that you will become a rainmaker. Rather, you have to work at it over the course of your career. In my case, specialization has helped a great deal. Look for opportunities with clients and to distinguish yourself in your field. Build client relationships. Let clients know you are responsive and there for them. Finally, do good work.

**Q: Tell us a tale of landing a big client.**

A: Recently, one of my partners, who represents a very large corporation, asked me to go with him to visit a client. The client was not necessarily looking for environmental counsel as it had some other outside environmental counsel. As I always do, I researched the client's issues, I got a sense of the culture as best I could, and I went prepared with an outline of the ways in which I could help. I was not overly aggressive, explained my background and asked lots of questions.

Shortly afterward, the client called me and asked me to work on a relatively small matter. I treated the small matter as I would any important matter for an important client. I recognized quickly that this was a very overworked in-house lawyer who was pulled in many different directions and that promptly responding to her queries was critical. It worked! The client has begun to use me for environmental work on a regular basis.

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