Six Marketing Ideas to Consider

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Sometimes ideas just seem to swirl around in my head begging for release. The following are a few ideas which I have shared with private clients here and there. I now offer them for public consumption.

Supercharge your website's vcards. It's increasingly common practice for law firm websites to include downloadable vcards for each attorney. The easier you make it for someone to capture your contact information, the more likely they are to do so. When a need arises, you want to make sure the prospect has your information handy.

The problem is that virtually all law firm vcards provide a bare minimum of information; name, address, email and phone are usually all that is provided. I don't know about you, but when I search my contacts for an attorney I use keywords such as practice area, county name, or both, to find the person I'm looking for. And when I go through the results, I'm looking for people I've met. But I meet so many people, it's hard to remember whether it's this person or that, without a face to go with it. Many of your prospects may have the same problem.

So many of you now have great bio photos. I suggest you include it in your vcard. Your photo makes you stand out among other contacts. It aids the memory for those you've met in passing. It makes you more "welcoming" than those without a photo. While we're at it, I also suggest you include your practice areas in the text portion of your vcard.

Present your attorneys by practice area. While we're on the topic of websites, let me suggest that many of your firms could enhance your website by adding to the practice area description page a listing of attorneys who practice in that area. Make each name a live link to the lawyer's bio.

Too often I visit sites looking for a particular type of attorney, and have to randomly search bio after bio to ferret out some of the attorneys in that practice area. Make it easier for visitors to your website to quickly find what they want. The more ways you make information quickly accessible, the more likely people will remain on your site to complete their search.

Put your money where your mouth is. No lawyer can guarantee results. Lawyer advertising must avoid presenting data –even though factual– about previous accomplishments in a way which might lead the average person to make assumptions about outcomes for their own matter.

But while you cannot guarantee a specific outcome, you *can* guarantee a level of client service. Some firms provide clients with what is sometimes referred to as their "bill of rights." It sets forth the firm's guidelines for responsiveness, client inclusion in the process, and so forth.

In today's overcrowded marketplace, client service is among the top factors which determines client retention, and client referrals. Think about how you can show clients you are serious about delivering exceptional service. Make your firm accountable to do so.

Make marketing part of your daily law firm life. While events you participate in come and go, you should be doing something every day to retain and develop clients. Whether the activity is touching base with former clients, writing a blog post, or sitting quietly to think about how to reach the right audience for your next seminar, every day should include some attention to marketing.

Successful rainmaking is not something which gets done "in between" busy times. Ask any successful rainmaker, and they will tell you it's just a habit that is part of their law firm lifestyle day in and day out.

Eighty percent of your efforts should be concentrated on strategies to bring in new clients. Twenty percent of your efforts should be devoted to maintaining existing relationships, and client retention.

If you need professional assistance, hire a coach. A marketing person can provide strategic support in getting out press releases, finding speaking opportunities, branding, and so forth. However, no matter how talented they are, they cannot replace the essential skills you have to apply constantly in relationship development. If you're not a natural, you can learn. But you can only learn if you want to. That's where a coach comes in.

No isn't never, it's just not right now. Too many lawyers have a problem with "no". Even the toughest trial or matrimonial lawyer is a fragile personality at heart. Most lawyers are. Rejection is not handled well. So often a lawyer will avoid rejection altogether by not asking for work. Efforts are made to build a relationship, but when it comes time to ask for work, there is a tendency to back off. After all, you tell yourself, if I've done a decent job of building the relationship, the person will just give me work if they have a need.

Sometimes clients will indeed take the next step in building the relationship, and ask for your assistance. However, just as often they will not. Often you need to ask for the opportunity to be of service. You need to extend your hand across the table. You need to risk hearing that dreaded "no."

Whenever you're turned away, repeat "***No doesn't mean never, it just means not now***." I don't believe that I have ever taken no as a final answer. I attribute much of my success through the years to this simple approach. If rebuffed, try not to take it personally. And by all means be gracious.

Step back and evaluate what has resulted in the undesired response. Is it bad timing? Have you failed to demonstrate the value you bring to the table? Is the relationship insufficiently developed? Are your points not convincing? Are your credentials not sufficient?

Make necessary course corrections. For example, if you believe that credentials might be an issue, look for an opportunity to demonstrate specific skills which you may not have previously had, or not presented well. After some time in which further progress has been made, ask again.

Develop several vignettes. You've heard of the importance of having your elevator speech, no doubt. [For a copy of "Who You Are in 60 Seconds or Less" send an email request to lawpractice@pabar.org.] In addition to that, I suggest you have several vignettes prepared. A vignette is a short conversational story which, in the space of two to five minutes, relates an unusual accomplishment which demonstrates the skill you've utilized on behalf of a client. The vignette should be crafted in such a way as to sound unrehearsed and conversational. It also must be interesting.

Many law firm website bios now feature accomplishments and representative clients and matters which are listed to demonstrate such skills. However, in face-to-face conversation it would be inappropriate to start rattling off the same list. It would feel like a strong sales pitch, and send a prospect running in the other direction. On the other hand, a vignette can communicate the same skill, albeit not in mass quantity, in an interesting conversational way that is not off-putting.

These are just a few ideas to chew on. PBA members who want more ideas, or wish to discuss strategies, are welcome to contact me for assistance. Your dues dollars at work!

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