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## LEGAL MARKETING

### Marketing Your Firm: 10 Things You Can Do Now to Make a Difference

BY STACY WEST CLARK

*Special to the Legal*

Like clockwork every fall — once the summer ends and kids go back to school — my phone starts ringing with calls from law firms who see a long fall and winter ahead and are re-energized to rev up their business development activities. Most of these firms do not have marketing plans in place and are looking to “get something going” right away.

Well here is your fall marketing “to-do” list.

- Put strategic lists together and use them. Make sure you have a great list of who your clients are and who your referral sources are. Divvy up responsibility to the lawyers in your firm to contact each one. Come up with a reason to contact the client that is beneficial to them in some way. Repeat this six times during the year.

- See top client and referral sources. Visit and spoil these folks. Interview them on their satisfaction with the firm. Understand their business challenges and obstacles to their success. Introduce them to new customers and contacts. With respect to clients, try to ensure that the firm is helping them in as many practice areas as possible.



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Cross-sell. The more areas your firm is involved with — and the tighter the relationship between you and your client — the harder it will be for any other firm to steal your client. (Psst. If you did not know already — other law firms and lawyers *are* looking at your client base and trying to erode it.)

- Audit the experience of being a client. Because other firms are actively trying to woo your clients to their side of the field, make sure your service to your existing clients is outstanding. How? Become a secret shopper at your own firm or hire an outside consultant to do it and see how fast calls and e-mails are returned and how you are treated. Note how those who work for you go beyond the call of duty helping a client. Great service will become the differentiating factor among law firms, so focus on what your firm is doing.

- The “C” word — pay me to do it and I will. Make sure your compensation system is somehow tied to performance. Does each lawyer in your firm have a tactical plan with clear metrics onto which compensation can be determined? They should.

- Figure out what clients *have* to buy this year and market that! Are there changes in the law coming? New regulatory and reporting requirements? Are there triggering events coming up in your clients’ lives — like buying a home, having children, divorcing or retiring — that necessitate some estate planning help. Figure out what your clients need to — not have to — buy this year, and sell it. Develop a marketing plan (Internet and one-on-one activities) around this.

Legal marketing expert Larry Bodine provides some great advice. He says: “Research the hot areas of law by going to hear what general counsel are saying at marketing conferences. They’ll tell you what they want. Instead of looking for work for an idle practice group, lawyers should look where the activity is and learn the skills they need — i.e., go fishing where the fish are!” I love it and he is right.

- Focus on the “A” team. Spend your greatest marketing time and dollars on

supporting the “superstars” and future superstars in your firm. Don’t make everyone feel compelled to market. Focus your firm’s resources on those who really want to do it and are good at it.

- Put together a public record of your accomplishments. Clients are coming to you because they want you to win for them. So, promote your positive track record — both yours and your firm’s. Figure out some way — like many astute PI firms do — to tally and record your accomplishments on behalf of clients. One litigation firm that does this extremely well is Quinn Emanuel. The firm’s website, [www.quinnemanuel.com](http://www.quinnemanuel.com), provides a compelling picture of representative victories. Similarly Lathrop & Gage has a wonderful ad campaign, which also appears on its website, [www.lathropgage.com](http://www.lathropgage.com), showing a map of the United States with pins all over and a headline: “Been there. Won that!” These are major commercial litigation firms. Corporate law firms can demonstrate their success track record for clients in the same way by showing how much they saved their clients in tax planning, compliance, enforcement savings and more. Make sure your lawyer bios reflect what you have accomplished and for what kinds of clients.

- Have a great website with terrific bios and helpful materials on it. Use great photography. The look and feel of the site really does matter. Assess how you feel when you look at your own firm’s site — proud, disinterested or even embarrassed. Make sure your site is great — and informative from the clients’ standpoint. Moreover, stay

tuned for an article coming on what a great law firm website looks like. There are hundreds of firms in this area with very tired and worse, ineffective sites.

- Industry marketing. Have you tried it yet? It really does work. Pick an industry where your clients are and go deep. Hang out where the clients are. Go to industry conferences. Read industry publications. Get active. Speak to the associations. Write for their periodicals. Help the industry advance in some way. Take generic publications and make them industry specific for the benefit of your clients. Get to know the reporters who cover the industry and help them with news and stories. Executing a comprehensive industry focused plan will help you eventually become the “go-to” lawyer for that sector. I have seen it work many, many times. Go to my friend branding expert Ross Fishman’s website, [www.fishmanmarketing.com](http://www.fishmanmarketing.com), and find out what firm has parlayed expertise in pesticide law into being known as “Bug Lawyers.”

- Mandate associates get involved. When I was an associate at Morgan Lewis and a partner asked me to write a “white paper” on a new development, my response was always “no problem.” No matter how long or late I would need to toil on it, I did it. I feel “the times, they are a changing” and many associates do not “hop to it” when requested to do nonbillable business development work. It should be a mandatory part of the job. In fact, I think firms should mandate that associates join and become active in at least one outside professional — not

necessarily bar — association, and prove their involvement to the firm. In other words, there should be documented metrics. How many meetings has the lawyer attended? How many acquaintances and friendships have been started? Have any speeches been made or articles written or leadership positions attained?

This list is just the beginning. There is so much more you and your firm can do. So as I like to say: Get up, get going — get started. •