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LEGAL MARKETING

Ten Tips for More Referrals From Other Lawyers

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Special to the Legal

For lawyers who depend on referrals from other lawyers to build their practice, I have news for you. There are marketing activities you need to do offline and online that can make this happen. A combination of these things is a must. Underlying all of these suggestions is the command that you must treat your referral sources like clients — or better yet — royalty. They are your top priority to please and on an equal playing field with your clients for your attention. Here is what you need to do:

1. Target your top referring lawyers. Identify who your main referral sources are and take the top five and figure out ways you can make their life better. Offer to help them with something in their professional or personal life. (See my earlier article from *The Legal* on value-added



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services for ideas, “25 Value-Added Services to Offer Your Clients for Free,” published April 21, 2009.) Definitely be uber-communicative about how cases went that they sent you. Thank them for the opportunity to help. Then figure out how you can make their practice or life better multiple times during the course of a year. Each month, add another referral source to your list to target for such personal attention.

2. Go “in-house” to law firms and strut your stuff. Every lawyer wants free CLE. Plan a

program, get it approved by the Pennsylvania Continuing Legal Education Board, and go in-house with lunch or breakfast and do it for free for all the lawyers in a firm that sends you work. They will see you “strut your stuff” and appreciate the free CLE. A double whammy!

3. Speak together. Identify opportunities to co-partner with your referral sources on a seminar or other mutually beneficial event. Plan a webinar together or plan a panel that will get you both in front of your respective target audiences and bolster your credentials as a leader in the area.

4. Happy birthday. Yes, we lawyers are people too and like to be remembered for being great humans. Calendar your referral sources’ birthdays. Put their names on Google Alert and if you get a notice that they have done something great — congratulate them. They will remember you for thinking of them.

5. Brag a tiny bit. When you win a case, author something, go on a board, or do anything that further credentials you as a “go-to” lawyer, let your referral sources know in a professional way. Issue press releases to periodicals they might read. If the news is big enough, author a letter to go out under the managing partner’s name congratulating you that you can send to your clients.

6. Work your law school classmates. It does not matter how long ago you graduated, you and your former law school cohorts have something in common and it is natural for you to want to help each other. Comb through your class list (your law school can provide — many times online) and identify classmates who don’t compete with you and to whom there is a fair chance you could send work to as well. Meet and talk and figure out ways to help each other.

7. Keep your Internet presence current. Make sure your LinkedIn, Avvo and firm bios are always in sync and up to date. Be aware that your bio on websites like Avvo, LinkedIn, Super Lawyers and others may rank higher on Google searches than your own firm bio. So don’t ignore these websites, as they are very powerful with search engines and, these days, referral sources checking you out will check out everything about you and not just stop with your

firm bio necessarily.

8. Speech. Author. Speak at lawyer gatherings. Go on the circuit. Teach a Pennsylvania Bar Institute course. Address a bar committee of which you are not a member at one of their regular meetings. Add valuable education to the life of other lawyers who will then think of you as an expert. Write for key publications read by referring lawyers. When you write, send a copy of the article out to all referral sources as a possible helpful resource.

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9. Be the spoke. Consider putting together a networking group of various lawyers who don’t compete and identify ways to socialize and help each other. Meet regularly.

10. Look in all different places for referrals. If you are in a large firm, look for small or county firm lawyers who may not be able to handle a “bet your company” problem or the like. If you are in a small firm, look to make connections with mega-firm

lawyers who may have conflicts or no desire to handle smaller cases at a lower fee level.

11. Bonus: Make others look good. OK, I said 10 tips — but let me sneak one more in. Consider ways to make your referral sources look good to their clients. Offer to speak to their clients for free on a subject that might be of value. Compliment your referral source in the presence of others. Nominate them for awards when they do great things. Give to get — for sure.

There is so much you can do, so as I like to say, get up, get started ... get going. Let me know how you make out. •