

Can a Client Seminar Bring you Business?

You bet –if you do it right! Ten (Ok 11) fast tips.

1. Be first. Be fresh. Pick a topic that no one else is holding a program on—or if they are---put yours on in a more creative way. Consider what issues are keeping your clients up at night and do a program on those subjects, Give people a real reason to leave their offices.

2. Use the Invitation to Market. Invite all clients and prospects you want to come and want to *know* about your expertise in the area. Create an invitation that shouts your expertise in the area—so even if a client can not come, they will remember you have leading lawyers in the area.

3. Plan Backwards. Start with the event date and work backwards to create a list of deadlines and organizational tasks that have to be accomplished. Best scenario: start organizing the event 6 months before it occurs. Go through every detail of how the event will be run. Practice being a guest. Sit in the space, walk around the conference venue and eat the food that will be served. Test run everything. A great seminar is all in the details.

4. Inform the Team. Meet regularly with all everyone who will have a role in the execution of the event—the lawyers, staff, paralegals and receptionists. Regularly go over ever aspect of the planning stage—from venue, to speaker powerpoints to, handouts, to what rsyps have come in. Keep everyone informed and aware of the plans and what each other's role is in the event.

5. Make sure the lawyers are good at speaking. Insist they do a dry run with you. If they need a day of public speaking help, get it for them .Critique their powerpoint as well. A deadly presentation actually can damage your firm's reputation. Let's face it—there are MANY bad speakers out there. Put internal law firm politics aside and put your best foot, oh I mean speaker—forward,

6. Do publicize it repeatedly. Do send a “Save the Date” notice or card to invitees—preferably 3 months or more before the event. Do leave seminar information out in your reception area. Do post the date and rsvp instructions on the home page of your website. Do create a page on your website dedicated to the event—unless of course only a handful of clients are invited. Do notify local trade publications of the event via press releases and notices for their “calendar or events” sections—if you want the public to come.

7. Make sure the handout shows you off. If you can, don't spare expense on it. Make sure your handout is an elegant marketing statement about the firm and the lawyer speaking. It should be designed to have shelf life. Print every page of it on original firm letterhead (not copies of it) or on specially designed firm “seminar” stationary. Make it as professional as something your major clients

would issue to their major stockholders or clients. That is the quality they are used to.

8. Work the evaluation form. Definitely have an evaluation form—but use it to bring in business. Keep it very short and to one page. Ask these two questions at the end: *What topics would you most like to hear a program on in the future* and *Would you like us to do an on-site presentation at your offices on this or the following (list) topics.*

9. Designate lawyers from the firm to talk with specified clients at the program. Since law firm marketing is “relationship-based”, it is imperative that every client or contact who attends is greeted by an attorney they know and actually spoken to for a few minutes. The attorney should similarly follow-up with the guest after the program to see if they liked it and have any questions about the subject matter.

10. Consider small. There is no need to always try to hold huge seminars or get the maximum number of bodies in the room. Per No. 9 above, the success of the seminar should not be judged by the volume of people who came but by the number of one-on-one interactions your lawyers had with the guests. A small roundtable or program held for 15 people—where lawyers get to really hear the legal pain points of the attendees and talk with them—may produce more results—than a large event ever may.

11. Follow-up. After the event, remedy inaccuracies on your mailing list. Follow-up on comments made on client evaluations. Have a post-event de-briefing session to assess how to do things better next time. Thank clients for attending in writing or on the phone (no email) and ask if they want an additional handout or on-site program done at their offices.

Stacy West Clark Esq. has been helping lawyers and law firms expand their practices for 20 years. She is a former attorney with the international law firm of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius and was its first marketing director—a position created for her in 1986 based on a proposal she made to the Firm’s Management. She is President of Stacy Clark Marketing LLC (www.stacyclarkmarketing.com.)