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Paula Black has advised law firms around the globe on everything from powerful and innovative design to marketing strategy and business growth. She is an award-winning Amazon-bestselling author and the force behind **In Black & White** (inblackandwhiteblog.com), a blog dedicated to clear, straightforward advice and open discussion of legal marketing issues. For more information on Paula Black, her books and her company please visit paulablacklegalmarketing.com.

How to Make the Most of Your Legal Marketing Budget

I recommend 3-4% of gross revenue as a marketing budget. If that seems like a lot, it is. It's not limitless, however. Yet many highly respected firms squander marketing money by the truckload...often in the same familiar ways. Don't let your firm fall into that trap. Here are prime examples of marketing vehicles or initiatives that you may have tried or thought about. Some, if done well, can pay big dividends...or, if done poorly, waste big money. Others are just a waste of money, period.

Marketing events sponsored by your firm must always be considered good relationship-building platforms. These include seminars, open houses, and the like. Personal follow-up is key to making them work. For seminars and similar events, smaller is better. Consider a seminar series, focused on a particular industry or area of the law, where participants gather repeatedly. That way, the follow-up is built in.

Advertising is rife with pitfalls. Studies show that it takes 7 to 11 impressions before somebody will recall seeing your ad. Consistency and frequency are essential! So is an attention-grabbing design and a minimum of ad copy. If your practice is more consumer-oriented, such as family law, then the Yellow Pages are worth the money. One-time-only and tombstone type print ads are not worth the money. Legal Directories are popular, proliferating, and pretty much pointless. Decision-makers simply don't use them very much. Bottom line...hold onto your cash.

Partner's pet projects are rarely budgeted, hardly ever consistent with firm-wide marketing objectives, and tend to consume vast quantities of money and staff time. When one comes up for discussion, identify whether it's a worthwhile charitable contributions or just a pet project. Examples of the latter include sponsorships of social events that have little or no relevance to the firm's strategic objectives. Point to your strategic plan and just say no!

Holiday gifts and cards usually get lost in the year-end shuffle. Make your firm stand out by sending gifts and cards around Thanksgiving or the first of the year. If you must send holiday cards, by all means, sign them personally!

Golf and lunch (among other things) are fine marketing activities, highly conducive to relationship building...provided you play and eat with people who have the ability to hire or refer you. To do otherwise is not an effective use of your marketing time. The profession's top rainmakers know this. They develop a systematic plan to build and enhance client relationships. **The key word is plan.**