



# THE MATTE PAD

MARKETING KNOW-HOW FOR  
THE LEGAL PROFESSION

## What Law Firms Can Learn from Organized Crime



**Organized crime is getting more efficient and competent every day, and there are some lessons that law firms can learn from their constantly changing tactics.**

I recently read an article entitled “What Business Can Learn from Organized Crime” by [Marc Goodman](#) in the Harvard Business Review that I loved so much, I simply had to write an extra long post to share it’s message for the legal industry. Here’s a link to the [article](#) if you are a subscriber.

**Use the news to create opportunity.** Yes, crooks are not all stupid, and many are very quick to jump on the latest news or trend to set up a scam. But the lesson here is *watch the headlines, move quickly, and try to get out in front of developing trends*. If you see a way to take the latest news trend and turn it into a blog post, do it. Has a new law passed that will affect your clients in a positive or negative way? Be the first to tell them about it and how they should respond. By being on top of the latest news and trends, you’ll establish your firm as a valuable information resource and be the first place your clients go for information. And bonus, if you are talking about a hot news story, chances are your subject matter will be a trending topic on Twitter and you’ll get even more exposure because of it.

**Outsource to specialists.** Believe it or not, crime rings and terrorist organizations are quite adept at finding and outsourcing tasks to specialists rather than trying to handle everything in-house. In fact, according to the article, “they are constantly networking to develop sources with the specialized skills they need.” The lesson here is *don’t limit yourself by over-reliance on in-house talent. Cultivate e-lancers and other contractors who can provide the precise skills your project demands*. This one is pretty obvious to me. Most companies and firms are starting to outsource more and more tasks to take advantage of outside expertise that they can’t normally afford to maintain in-house, yet also so they can focus on their core competencies. Frankly, that’s why we are in business. If everyone had in-house writers, marketing strategists, graphic designers, ad buyers and Web designers, there would be no need for firms like [MAX](#). So take advantage of the skills of experts outside your firm, and you’ll soon see the benefits in both financial savings and increased reach.

**Cash isn’t the only incentive.** Sure, few of us would work for free, but for those of us who really enjoy what we do, a paycheck isn’t our only incentive. The same is true for the criminal element. While there are still thugs and “enforcers” out there, much of the criminal activity today is white collar and perpetrated by hackers who get a thrill from foiling complicated systems.



The lesson: *Socially-oriented businesses aren't the only ones that can use workers' desire for meaning as a motivating force. Find a way to tap into employees' needs for recognition, challenge and belonging.*

I've talked about this before in the post entitled, [Are Your Law Firm Employees Happy or Just Trudging Along](#), and it's still true. Yes, we all need a paycheck and deserve to be financially rewarded for the work we perform. But at the end of the day, we are happier all around if we get a sense of accomplishment from what we do and are recognized for our efforts. So, for example, if you have someone on your staff, attorney or not, who is interested in social media, do what you can to tap into that and let them thrive.

**Exploit the long tail.** Criminals have evolved over the years. While in the past they were looking for one big hit, say a bank robbery, they have now learned that they can make a lot more in the long run by stealing small amounts from multiple sources over a longer period of time. And bonus, the victims are less likely to notice \$100 missing from their bank accounts than if the entire contents of their house go missing. The lesson of this is that *a business model that aims for many small transactions instead of a single big hit can result in larger long-term profits and provide numerous opportunities to improve efficiency along the way.* To apply this to the legal marketing arena is pretty easy. I'd much rather see a law firm use a variety of tactics over time to reach their intended market then spend all that budget on one big hit. It's how we market these days. We have a consistent social media presence, send out a monthly [newsletter](#), purchase an ad in a trade journal, attend a [conference](#) where our prospects are gathered, etc. rather than purchase one big ad in the Wall Street Journal. In reality, more people may see the ad in the Wall Street Journal, but will it lead to much business for your average law firm? Probably not. But a consistent, drip approach will work wonders.

**Collaborate across borders.** Interestingly enough, former sworn enemy criminal organizations have started teaming up. They have discovered what many businesses and law firms have yet to figure out – by collaborating you can often deliver a better service and reach a broader market. The lesson from this article here is *don't look at competitors simply as rivals. Consider the mutual benefits of partnerships.* Most attorneys have known this for ages, and the majority of you are happy to refer business to your friends with other specialties. A broad business attorney doesn't think twice about calling in the expertise of an IP attorney when needed. But I'll suggest you go one step further...get to know your "real" competitors too. By creating friendly relationships with those that deliver similar services, you will learn how to market against them (zag when they zig), but you'll also be able to create relationships where you can send overflow business when you simply have reached capacity at your firm. I'm of the opinion that there is plenty of work out there for all of us, so get to know your competition and make nice with them too!

What other lessons do you think we can apply to law firms? Are any of these off base? I'd love to hear your thoughts.



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Welcome to The Matte Pad! Here you'll find tips, trends and tools to help the busy legal marketing professional. I hope you'll find this content valuable and practical. Information on the latest social media trends, creative ideas and marketing strategies that you can use at your law firm or in your legal marketing department.

