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Legal Marketing Strategies

Associates Beware:
10 Legal Marketing Mistakes to Avoid

By Margaret Grisdela

Associates on the path to partner face the best and worst of times. Sure, the economy is tough, but this just means that young lawyers will be forced early in their career to hone the business development skills that will serve them well for an entire legal career. Plus, social media, Internet marketing, and other uses of free or low cost technology provide dozens of ways to attract the attention of qualified prospects.

Here are ten easy tips to keep your attorney marketing plan active and effective.

1. Invest in your client contact database. Time is the major investment in building your client and prospect file; you don't have to buy any fancy software. A clean, accurate database easily translates into future billable hours. An Excel file will work fine. Note that if you keep your contact file in Microsoft Outlook, it can be difficult to export this critical data.

2. Ask for permission to call. Don't be afraid to ask if you can call someone after a meeting to schedule a get together for lunch, breakfast, or coffee. Then do so!

3. Remember names and places. This is where your database can be a lifesaver. When you meet a new person, jot a few notes on the back of their business card after the event to remind you of items you discussed. Record personal items they might mention (i.e., kids, spouse, or previous employment).

4. Develop a strategic plan for your referral network. Most lawyers find that referrals from clients, non-competing attorneys, accountants, and bankers can supply a steady stream of qualified leads. Take this one step further and write down your plan. Prepare a timeline for how often you want to meet with your best referral sources. Once every 45-60 days is perfect. Referral sources with less frequent leads can be scheduled for every 3-6 months. Always be on the look-out for new "A" level referral sources.

5. Stay in touch. It may take at least 5-6 contacts before you warrant a place in your prospect's memory bank. Don't take this personally! Everyone is busy, so you need to maintain a reasonably high profile.

6. Remember to reciprocate when you get a referral. Returning the favor with reciprocal referrals wins extra points, especially when the referral comes from an accountant or fellow attorney. When you get a referral from a client, the following point works well.

7. Thank your referral source. A handwritten note works wonders, or a small but thoughtful gift might be appropriate. (A referral fee is up to the two parties, within ethical guidelines.)

8. Follow up! It's true; 90% of success can be just showing up. It takes at least 3-4 contacts before a prospect becomes a client. Most attorneys give up or forget after one contact, leaving a lot of business on the table for their competition.

9. Write articles in legal and trade publications. A well-written article can add value to your CV for years to come. Plus, there are lots of ways to market your articles (post to your website, send to clients, include in proposal packages, etc.).

10. Stay LinkedIn. As you meet new contacts and stay in touch with law school classmates, invite everyone to become part of your LinkedIn account. This is your personal asset, which will travel with you as you may move from one law firm to another. LinkedIn is an easy way to maintain your visibility. (Visit author Margaret Grisdela on LinkedIn at http://www.linkedin.com/in/legalexpertconnections.)

Remember, never stop marketing! The author invites your questions and comments.

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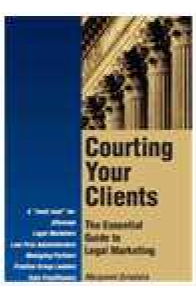

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