

**Lawyers Are From Mars, Marketing Professionals Are From Venus—  
(or How to Think Like an Entrepreneur)**

by Stephen E. Seckler, President, Seckler Legal Coaching\*

In 1992 in his bestselling book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, author John Gray wrote about the fundamental differences between males and females. Gray suggested that if men and women could learn to appreciate some of these differences that they would improve their relationships.

Gray's analysis is useful for couples who are trying to improve their relationships; but in business, understanding differences can broaden our thinking, improve our communication and make us more effective.

In a law firm, look at how different constituencies think about marketing and you quickly get the picture. A typical lawyer in private practice sees marketing as a necessary evil. Many do not like to be perceived as a salesman and many are afraid that they will sully their reputation by self promoting.

In contrast, talk to a marketing director and you get a very different take. To a marketing director, speaking, writing, volunteering, and meeting prospects for lunch are all worthwhile investments of time. While no single activity is likely to generate work by itself, the cumulative effect is to help an attorney to build her reputation and strengthen her business relationships. Over time, these activities enable the lawyer to attract more business.

These two mindsets can be summed up in the following way: marketing professionals think like entrepreneurs. They focus on "what might be". Lawyers, on the other hand, tend to "think like lawyers" and focus on "what might go wrong".

Of course anticipating what might go wrong is the essence of good lawyering. While a good lawyer factors in what the client wants, managing the downside risk is what lawyers do. But there is a lot that lawyers can learn from marketing and sales professionals. Law has become a highly competitive business and just doing good work is no longer enough to ensure that your pipeline will remain filled.

So what are some examples of how to shift your "risk avoidance" mindset to a more entrepreneurial mindset? The following list illustrates some common activities and the differences in how attorneys and marketing professionals approach them. They are illustrations of how shifting your own thinking can keep you focused on making a long term investment in your success.

1. Attending a networking function—*Attorney Mindset*: I never know what I am supposed to do at these events. How do I avoid wasting my time with people who are just looking for a job or want to sell me something? I never get any business from attending. *Marketing Mindset*: I have no expectations. I'll try to get a sense of who might attend and maybe even show up early to look over the list of attendees; but I'm simply going to try and meet people and learn what they do. Maybe I'll meet someone who shares my interests. If it feels comfortable and appropriate, I'll get permission to contact a few people I meet and invite them to coffee or lunch. I will be open to the serendipity of what comes my way.

2. Speaking at a client seminar or CLE program—AM: I didn't get any work from doing this. It was a waste of time. I'm just giving away all of my good tips to my clients and competitors for free. MM: I've put together a solid presentation that I can turn into an article. I can repeat this presentation for other clients with minimal effort. I have enhanced my reputation for being an expert in my practice area and I can add this to my bio. I can use the presentation as an excuse to write to my contacts.

3. Following Up With a Networking Contact—AM: He never responded to my e-mail. I've been rejected. If I contact him again, he'll think I'm a pushy salesman. MM: Maybe he never got my e-mail. I'll keep trying until I hear one way or the other. But I'll be a little creative about it. If I sent an e-mail first, next time I'll call or maybe I'll send an actual letter.

4. Calling In-Active Clients Just to Say Hi—AM: She knows I'm just calling because I want her business. MM: Maybe she likes hearing from me because we share common interests outside of work. Maybe there is some way I can be helpful to her that doesn't involve getting her business (maybe she needs a referral to another service provider-- or maybe I can introduce her business to potential investors.)

### Conclusion

Thirty years ago, there was far less pressure on lawyers to market. In today's business climate, however, lawyers ignore marketing at their own peril. Relationship building and reputation building may not come naturally to many attorneys; but avoiding these activities because they seem risky is no longer an option. So start thinking like an entrepreneur and take some chances. Be open to the serendipity that comes with getting out of your office. There will be plenty of time to think like a lawyer once you have the work; but only if you change your mindset and get the work in the door.

*\*Stephen Seckler is President of [Seckler Legal Coaching](http://www.seckler.com). He coaches attorneys on a broad mix of marketing and career issues. He writes the blog CounseltoCounsel ([www.seckler.com/blog/](http://www.seckler.com/blog/)) which was included in the American Bar Association Journal's Blawg100 in 2007 and 2008. He is a member of the MBA Law Practice Management Section Council. He can be contacted at [legal@seckler.com](mailto:legal@seckler.com).*