

How to Market the Personal Injury Practice... Without Spending a Gazillion Dollars in Advertising

If you are a personal injury attorney and the leader when it comes to advertising spending in your market, this article is not for you.

If however, you are a personal injury attorney who cannot afford to “outshout” the competition on television radio, or in print, fear not. There are a number of tactics the smaller PI firm or attorney can do to ensure their voice is heard. And they involve four very different though interrelated activities.

Before implementing those activities however, the smaller PI firm must take a hard look at what distinguishes it from its competitors. To the layperson, all PI firms appear pretty much the same from the outside -- they all make the same claims and all promise to get paid only if “you do.” Hence, it is imperative that the smaller firm find that little niche it can leverage to its advantage. This can take the form of a particular target group that the firm services, knows well and for which it can provide a sense of comfort. It can also seek to leverage experience in a specific area of personal injury -- be it brain injuries, mesothelioma, motorcycle accidents, birth injuries, etc. Finally, one can also seek to leverage the limited marketing dollars available across a very tightly targeted geographic area. If you can’t be the big player in the major market, be the biggest player in one section of that market.

Once those decisions have been made (and by the way, there’s no rule that says that you can’t elect to proceed with some permutation of them), it’s time to leverage those points of difference.

As stated, there are four ways in which to do this. The first of these involves the firm web site. If you peruse competitive web sites, you will notice that there’s a sameness to the vast majority of them. They all purport to do the same thing and cover the same practice areas. But an individual with a brain injury or mesothelioma or any specific type of injury or illness isn’t looking for a personal injury attorney -- they’re looking for a brain injury or mesothelioma lawyer. If your site can highlight a certain level of experience or accomplishment in this area, not only will visitors pick up on this “expertise,” but so will the search engines. Don’t want to de-emphasize other PI areas by focusing on any one? No problem. Consider creating a microsite on the specific area of interest and having it link off of the firm’s main site. And, just like the firm’s main site, this microsite can also be optimized for high search engine placement. Of course, if you’ve decided not to leverage a particular sub-practice area, you can apply a similar approach in reaching out to members of a specific target group.

The same logic applies to the second of the marketing activities at your disposal -- public relations. Through press releases, articles, broadcast interview placements, and presentations, the smart PI attorney can position himself as a premier authority

on a particular subject. This generates not just exposure – but free exposure. Further, all of the articles and videos and presentations can then be used as fodder for that web site or microsite, thereby further enhancing optimization efforts (i.e., the search engines just love new content).

The third highly effective means for getting one's name out there is through sponsorships with causes and organizations that relate to your particular area of focus. If you are going to emphasize brain injuries in your practice (and on your web site and through PR), then hook up with the hospitals, clinics, and non-profit groups that serve those who suffer from such maladies. Better still, organize an event or campaign that draws attention to a particular concern and to your firm at the same time. Think of public service campaigns that law firms have implemented warning of the hazards of drinking and driving. A little creativity can align your practice with a worthy cause, creating goodwill between yourself and your target prospects -- not a bad thing at a time when perceptions of PI attorneys are not as positive as one might hope.

Finally, if you take the geographic approach and seek to be the dominant player, albeit in a smaller area, the opportunity exists to leverage what marketing dollars you do have towards all kinds of marketing mix permutations. It is important to understand that oftentimes it is more important to reach a smaller number of people several times than it is to reach a large number of individuals only a few times. That is because research has shown that it usually takes quite a number of exposures to prompt an individual to action. And because you can't really prompt an individual to seek a PI attorney until that time that they've been injured, being "out there" on a regular basis in a smaller pond often is a wiser bet than casting your lot by being drowned out in the ocean.

In summary, while no one can argue the advantages of having a large marketing budget with which to promote one's firm, a willingness to carve out a specific niche, and little ingenuity can go a long way in offsetting those advantages.