

“Top Five” Legal Marketing Experts

By Lisa DiMonte

Last week I identified my “Top Five” Legal Marketing experts, and Larry Bodine shared his “Top Five” marketing tips. This week Stephen will share four secrets top rainmakers use to fill their practice. First, a little background about Stephen.

[Stephen Fairley](#) is a nationally recognized [law firm marketing expert](#) and has helped more than 7,000 attorneys from hundreds of law firms across the country to discover the secrets of generating more referrals and filling their practice. As CEO of The Rainmaker Institute, the nation’s largest law firm marketing company specializing in small law firms, Stephen helps attorneys at small law firms build 7- and 8-figure practices, while implementing systems to automate their business.

Stephen has appeared in the *American Bar Association’s Journal*, *Harvard Management Update*, *Inc* and *Entrepreneur*. He is a nationally recognized speaker and the international best-selling author of ten books and five audio programs. His academic training in clinical psychology and work as a therapist, along with his leadership in business, give him a unique perspective on legal marketing, which is great news for his attorney clients. He has specialized in helping attorneys create highly profitable and personally satisfying law practices for nearly a decade.

“It’s more than just creating a massive amount of money for my clients,” says Stephen. “It’s about seeing them use their money to create a meaningful life. I love to see clients create a lifestyle law business—one that supports, rather than interrupts, the lifestyle they want to lead. It’s my passion to help them get there faster.”

This summer, Stephen is hosting a series of Rainmaker Retreats in

locations where you can easily combine business with pleasure. The Summer 2010 schedule includes:

- [San Francisco](#), June 18-19
- [Las Vegas](#), July 16-17
- [Los Angeles](#), July 30-31

The Rainmaker Retreat is a 2-day, hands-on legal marketing boot camp. Attorneys walk out of the 2-day boot camp with a proven, step-by-step system for generating more and better referrals and a blue print for building a 7-8 figure lifestyle law firm.

4 Secrets Top Rainmakers Use to Fill Their Practice

Marketing your law firm takes time, money and advanced planning

From Stephen Fairley

"In the 20 years I have been an attorney, I have never had to market my law firm," an attorney I'll call Ralph informed me. "However, about six months ago my biggest client was bought out by a Fortune 500 company and my revenues dropped from \$600,000 to \$60,000 in 60 days. I'm 55 years old and I feel like I'm starting over. What can I do to quickly find more clients?"

Ralph approached me just before I was scheduled to give a presentation on rainmaking to a New Jersey State Bar audience of 160 attorneys. Since I only had a few minutes before going on stage, I gave him my card and asked him to meet me after the seminar.

That evening at dinner I shared with Ralph how our company has studied hundreds of top rainmaker attorneys to discover their secrets to building a financially successful and personally satisfying law practice.

I worked with Ralph over the next few months and with a lot of hard work he was able to build relationships with several referral sources who sent him dozens of new cases. He doubled his revenues in less than twelve months.

Fast forward two years. I had just finished up another bar association presentation when Ralph walked up to me. "I'm sorry I've been out of touch, Stephen," he said. "My business has grown so fast I couldn't keep up with it at first. I've had to hire three new people just to serve my clients. I drove in from out of town just to see you again and say thank you."

As Ralph discovered, the field of law firm marketing is highly competitive with more and more attorneys competing for the same clients. In my work with small law firms and solo practitioners, I have found there are several common strategies used by top attorneys to generate more referrals and fill their law practice.

Strategy 1. Build Relationships With Strategic Referral Partners

Strategic Referral Partners (SRPs) are people who already have a relationship with the people you want as clients. For example, if your niche is business law for small business owners, possible referral partners would be accountants, financial planners, local bankers, commercial real estate agents, and insurance agents, to name a few.

Here's the step-by-step referral building system we created that's used by hundreds of attorneys in a variety of practice areas:

- Identify several professions or industries that already have trusted relationships with your target market.
- Build or buy a database of potential referral sources (www.infoUSA.com and www.superpages.com are two great resources).
- Focus on refining your Unique Competitive Advantage by answering this question: "Why should someone hire me versus any of my competitors?"
- Create a form letter that includes who you work with, how you are different, and a personal invitation to get together to determine if/how you could work together.
- Send out 10-20 letters per week.
- Have your assistant call the people you sent letters to and determine their level of interest in connecting with you.
- Have your assistant set up appointments for you over lunch or coffee.
- When you meet with prospective SRPs, find out more about their businesses and how you can help their clients.
- Ask compelling questions to let them know you are interested in building a mutually beneficial referral relationship, and don't forget the best question: "How would I know if the person I'm talking to would be a great referral for you?"
- Ask them if they would be willing to send you referrals.
- If possible, try to send them a referral in the next 30 days.
- Follow up every 4-6 weeks to stay connected with them (send them a letter, article of interest, or one of your press releases).

Strategy 2. Build A Powerful Online Presence

The Internet changes everything when it comes to law firm marketing and how consumers and business owners select law firms. Many attorneys do not realize that most people will research them online before they ever hire them.

Having a great website is essential to your practice. The only thing worse than not having a website is having one that looks like every other law firm's. Hire a website development company that specializes in legal websites, but make sure you end up with a custom-built website, not a template that can also be used by dozens or hundreds of other law firms.

In addition to creating your website, you can boost your online impact by writing:

- Blogs (also known as weblogs or blawgs). Blogs are a great, inexpensive way to get online fast. There are a growing number of journalists who look to "bloggers" as experts. The search engines love blogs and the best part is that setting up your blog is free if you use either www.blogger.com or www.typepad.com. Not technically savvy? Have a professional website designer set one up for you.
- Articles for online submission. Did you know there are dozens of websites that will publish your articles for free? All you have to do is submit them and within a matter of weeks you will begin to see your online presence grow. These short, education-based articles are written specifically for your niche. If you can write 500 words on a topic, you can use this simple strategy.
- Press releases. Getting into the media is a powerful way to generate buzz about your firm and build your online presence. Press releases are an effective, low cost way to do this. A great place to start is www.PRweb.com. You can set up a free account and you only pay when you submit a press release. Don't know how to write one? There are many great how-to articles; just search Google.com for "how to write a press release."

Strategy 3. Keep In Touch With Clients

The best source of referrals is often a satisfied client, but only if the client remembers you when one of their friends or colleagues needs your help. If you're like most attorneys, you have helped hundreds of people over the years, so staying connected to them every 4-8 weeks can be an overwhelming task. Here are a few tips we recommend for keeping in touch with your clients:

- Use a database management program. Have your assistant enter their contact info into a database program like ACT!, Goldmine or Salesforce.com. We personally use and recommend www.InfusionsoftforAttorneys.com. Remember, information is only as useful as it is accessible.
- Collect their email addresses. Add a place for their email addresses on your intake form.
- Send out a "Keep In Touch" letter to former clients thanking them for the opportunity to serve them.
- Conduct an Annual Client Satisfaction Survey (this is a good activity for the end of the year). Ask them what they liked most and least about your firm as well as what upcoming challenges you could assist them with.

- Offer them a special report or “Top 10 Tips” sheet and request they update their contact information.
- Send them practical, educational information every 4-6 weeks. Electronic newsletters, called e-zines, are the best way to stay connected. Make them short. Focus on informing, educating and adding value to your clients (do not turn this into a sales pitch). We recommend www.ConstantContact.com to manage your e-zine.

Strategy 4. Develop A Unique Competitive Advantage

With an estimated 600,000-800,000 practicing attorneys across the nation, standing apart from your competitors is increasingly difficult. I have asked hundreds of attorneys, “Why should someone hire you versus your competition?” Virtually all of them respond with the same four answers: quality, service, years of experience, and price—none of which has any impact on prospective clients!

Quality is not a feature people will pay extra for. It simply means you meet the minimum level of expectations. For every service you provide there are a thousand other law firms who offer the exact same service. Regardless of how long you’ve been in practice, someone has been there longer. And do you really want to be known as the “Wal-Mart” of law firms—the low cost leader?

In the 2-day [Rainmaker Retreat legal marketing boot camp](#) we share 10 different ways to create a Unique Competitive Advantage. Here are three of them:

- Focus on the benefits, value and results. When meeting with a prospective client, emphasize the benefits you offer to clients, the value you bring, and the results (be careful to follow your state’s ethics in advertising regulations).
- Focus on service, not the list of services your firm provides. Explain how you serve your clients better by going out of your way for them and by treating every person as a VIP. Ask yourself what kind of “client experience” you want each to have. Be very specific and write down your ideas. Put an action plan into place with your staff to ensure that every experience a prospect or client has with your firm is a positive one.
- Focus on solutions. People don’t buy legal services; they buy solutions to their legal problems. Prepare a case study of how you found a creative solution to another client’s problem. Explain how you came up with it and the results.

Marketing your law firm is both art and science. There are no magic wands or silver bullets. It takes time, energy, money and advanced planning.

It’s important to realize that marketing is a process, not an event. Too many attorneys view marketing is an event you go to or an ad you place in the yellow

pages. Top Rainmakers recognize marketing is a process, a systematic approach to building referral relationships, cultivating contacts, and staying connected to clients.

For more information about how to grow your law firm, contact Stephen Fairley at 888-588-5891 or visit <http://bit.ly/YeRvd> for a FREE 40-page law firm marketing guide.

You can also connect with Stephen Fairley on these sites:

<http://bit.ly/YeRvd> —Free 40-page law firm marketing guide

www.Linkedin.com/in/StephenFairley —Connect with Stephen on LinkedIn

www.Twitter.com/StephenFairley —Follow Stephen on twitter

www.Facebook.com/fairley —Become friends on Facebook

<http://www.Facebook.com/LawFirmMarketing> —Learn how to market your law firm

My sincere thanks to Stephen for sharing his marketing strategies. I encourage you to select one strategy as your action item for today. MyLegal.com is a free platform for the hosting of your articles, press releases and blogs. Click [here](#) to post your article or press release. To post your blog, simply join MyLegal.com , click “My Home”; then “My Blog” and copy and paste your content. Three easy steps and you’re done. Additionally, we regularly select blogs as featured content on our homepage and syndicate this content throughout the Internet. Please note all material is subject to review and approval before posting.

Next week we’ll hear from legal marketing expert Jay Fleischman.

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