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Paula Black has advised law firms around the globe on everything from powerful and innovative design to marketing strategy and business growth. She is an award-winning, Amazon-bestselling author and the force behind **In Black & White** (inblackandwhiteblog.com), a blog dedicated to clear, straightforward advice and open discussion of legal marketing issues. For more information on Paula Black, her books and her company please visit paulablacklegalmarketing.com.

Legal Marketing: Are You Putting Yourself In The Right Market?

One of the most important lessons to learn on your marketing and business development journey is this: you can't be everything to everybody. In order to get the best, fastest, most consistent results you first have to figure out where you want to be. You choose where you want to place your focus—meaning you need to market to what you want, not what you have. Figure out your niche, where YOU and your expertise fit in within the larger arena of law, lawyers and firms. Consider this: there are hundreds of thousands of real estate attorneys out there, tens of thousands who focus their practice on representing builders, thousands who do only litigation and maybe hundreds who litigate only for hotels and resort developers. Now think about how many litigate on behalf of hotel and resorts developers who build internationally. See my point? Narrow it down to the most detailed version of the type of work you want and it will make your business development that much easier. Here's why:

A smaller market means your information is more valuable.

If your market is small that means there probably isn't a plethora of information out there. If you're blogging, you may be one of only a handful giving commentary. When someone goes looking for information, your advice and insight suddenly becomes incredibly important. YOU become the recognized expert in that area and can then use that platform to further your marketing efforts. When a reporter needs a source, they will call YOU. When an attorney from another practice area needs information on your specialty they will contact YOU. And when potential clients hear your name you can bet they will call YOU for your insight. Be the big fish in the small pond, not the other way around.

You can speak more directly to your clients' needs.

The more specialized the area of practice, the clearer your audience is. Think carefully about that audience. What do they want to know, what do they already know and what are they worrying... thinking... strategizing about at this moment? Scan the news for items that relate to your area of expertise and send them on or post them to your blog. The smaller the niche, the simpler it will be to find topics that interest ALL of them, and not just a small group.

You can make smaller moves.

With less competition comes more room for creativity in marketing and business development. As I mentioned above, blogging about a specialty topic (albeit one with a true audience) is a great way to draw attention to yourself; as is Twitter. With a smaller audience you can also target more specific publications, websites and organizations. The key is to do your research. Find out where your audience turns for information and volunteer your services. The smaller the audience the better chance you have of connecting with them on a more intimate level, opening up opportunity so that...

You have a better chance at getting referrals.

People want to do business with professionals that they know and like. Once you've established your audience and have done the groundwork to connect with them, offer them information and show your knowledge and expertise... the work will come. I recently interviewed a blogger who told me that one-third to one-half of his work comes from his blog—a blog that covers a relatively small topic in the law arena. He hypothesized that had he stayed with his original plan, taking whatever cases came to him, he would never have the success he has today. By focusing on a small, yet burgeoning, practice area he has created relationships with judges, professors, clerks, clients and other attorneys...all of whom refer him business that relates to his expertise.

The lesson here? Take the time to figure out what you know, what you're interested in and passionate about and what you have to offer potential clients and referral sources. Then focus, focus, focus on that. Stay true to your niche and the business will find you.