

Q: I think my firm could benefit from advertising, but I don't have \$250,000 in my budget.

A: We all know that there are two parts to bringing business into a law firm, Marketing and Sales.

The discussion isn't really about "advertising." It's about "marketing." Advertising is just one more weapon in a marketer's arsenal, to be used when appropriate to meet a firm's strategic goals.

As we all know, lousy execution can damage any of a firm's marketing tools, including public relations, brochures, Web sites, seminars, newsletters, advertising, or anything else. When executed awkwardly, networking, relationship development, and selling don't work either.

To be really successful, an organization needs to be effective in both Marketing and Sales. Without Marketing, few clients or prospects would have heard of you, so you get fewer opportunities and fewer meetings. Without the face-to-face contact with a real human that makes up "Sales," no actual business comes in the door.

Marketing alone won't generate enough business to keep the lights on at a corporate law firm. Neither will sales.

The "right" answer is not to junk one and focus exclusively on the other, it's to blend both in a way that makes sense for each firm and it's unique culture, strategic plan, and budget. Some of the most aggressive, sales-oriented firms I know have gotten rich after improving their marketing. Sometimes that marketing will include advertising. Sometimes it doesn't.

If you have a compelling message, advertising works. As we know, generating that message can be particularly difficult, because our lawyers often feel most comfortable focusing on the quality of their skills -- like everyone else. A bland message hurts ALL of a firm's marketing activities, and advertising is simply one particularly costly line item on that list.

It's silly to say advertising doesn't work. Of course it does. BAD advertising doesn't work. And, unfortunately, too much of our industry's advertising still falls into that category, although it's improved drastically in recent years.

And, as middle-market firms understand, an effective campaign doesn't necessarily have to cost \$250,000. The cost varies widely depending upon your specific target. National? Local? Industry specific? *Etc.*