

1+. 612. 669. 5548

EricksonMarketingInc.com
info@EricksonMarketingInc.com

Marketing Insights for Associates: Owning Your Career



By [Donna Erickson](#)
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Not everyone is born with a knack for marketing, but devoting necessary time and energy to determining what activities will be effective is an important part of investing in your career. Learning to market your practice early on will help you make a lasting impression and build a solid book of business, so craft your legal marketing style to ensure you get noticed and stay top of mind for clients, prospects and fellow attorneys.

Set your course, take action and always remember:

- To be successful, consistently provide high quality legal work and superior service to clients and partners of the firm.
- Throughout your career, clients always come first.
- Build long-lasting relationships and success will follow!

Develop a plan and follow through. The most logical first step to marketing your practice is to put your goals and objectives on paper. Create a business development plan that is tailored to fit your individual style - this is not one-size-fits-all. There is a plethora of marketing tactics available, each effective in their own way. Incorporate a healthy mix of marketing activities that will lead you to achieve your own professional goals while also contributing to the growth and prosperity of the firm.

In your daily practice, you have three key audiences: clients, prospects and partners.

Your business development and marketing plan should help you reach these target groups and address questions like:

- What type of work do I enjoy the most?
- How can I attract more clients in this area?
- What can I do to promote my knowledge in a specific area of law?
- How do I become a "go-to" lawyer in this area?

The plan should outline where you want your career to take you in 3-5 years.

Here are a few practices to consider in your plan:

Maintain a list of your contacts. Clients, referral sources, potential clients, colleagues, experts, classmates and fellow members of trade or other groups. As you get to know your contacts, make notes for yourself regarding the contact, follow-up items, their hobbies, etc.

Maintain an experience inventory. Keep track of your cases/transactions, results, value to the client, and other important information, as well as your presentations and publications. This will serve as an excellent reference tool in the future when you need to recall your experience for potential clients in specific areas.

Network, network, network. Get out there and make an impression. Before each meeting or event, decide what you want to accomplish and who you would like to meet, and make it happen! Participate in activities in which you have an interest and where you can meet potential clients and referral sources. Become active in the local bar association and other credited legal groups. Identify trade groups that attract prospects in a particular industry and get involved.

Meet contacts for breakfast or lunch. Make non-billable time work for you. Use breakfast and your mid-day break as a marketing opportunity; meet clients and others in your network for lunch or coffee. These invaluable meetings will bring your relationships to the next level and you never know when you'll receive that next client matter or lead.

Ask for referrals and more work. Sometimes getting more business is as easy as asking for it. If you are consistently providing quality legal service and delivering desired results, you should have a good chance at landing more work from existing clients. Your clients can also become your best referral sources.

Author timely articles. Track the latest developments in a particular area of law and identify target publications for reaching your audience. Get comfortable with writing and find opportunities both within and outside your firm. Upon publication, make your articles known to clients.

Present at seminars. Sign up to be a speaker at an upcoming seminar. Prepare timely material and practice in advance to ensure you make a good first impression. Remember to engage your audience and also mingle with the crowd before and after your presentation. Obtain a contact list of the attendees to add to your mailing list. Send a follow up letter thanking them for attending and encouraging them to contact you if they have questions.

Get to know social media. Join and be active on LinkedIn and Martindale-Hubbell Connected. Consider launching your own blog if you can commit to the upkeep. Blogs need a little TLC and should be updated with new content on a regular basis. If that is too time intensive for you, consider the abbreviated version: Tweeting.

Become a media resource. For more senior associates, securing interview opportunities with the media (on or off the record) can strengthen your credibility in key areas of law. Introduce yourself to reporters who cover topics for which you can be a trusted authority. Always be respectful of deadlines, even if you have to decline an opportunity. In all cases, maintain client confidentiality.

Whether you are a first-year associate or on the cusp of making partner, marketing does matter. To be a successful lawyer, you must keep one faithful eye on clients and the other on your future. Start investing in your career now and develop good marketing habits to make a lasting impression. Be committed to making progress and hold yourself accountable to your goals. It will pay off!

About the Author . . . [Donna Erickson](#) is the President of [Erickson Marketing, Inc.](#), a national full-service marketing consulting firm working exclusively with law firms. She has more than 20 years of hands-on experience developing and implementing effective marketing initiatives in law firms, both large and small. Donna is a charter member and past-president of the Minnesota Chapter of the Legal Marketing Association and can be reached at +1. 612. 669. 5548, Donna@EricksonMarketingInc.com, Erickson Marketing, Inc., P.O. Box 490758, Minneapolis, MN 55449.



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