

Ten Marketing Tips for Solo Practitioners

By Larry Bodine, a Business Development Consultant based in Tucson and Chicago. He advises law firms on marketing strategy, individual lawyer marketing plans and Web site plans. He can be reached at Lbodine@LawMarketing.com and 630.942.0977.



To get new business you need to shake people's hands and look them in the eye. New business comes in person. The idea is to market your practice by building relationships. The more time you spend on this kind of marketing, the better the results.

Network. Marketing is a contact sport, so get out of your office and start meeting people. Get active in your local business community. Join the chamber of commerce, service clubs and boards of charities. Go for the purpose of making as many new friends as you can.

Build referral sources. Become active in your local professional association, because other lawyers, accountants and consultants will refer files to you. Contact people who may not provide the particular services in which you have experience. Also solicit experienced litigators for conflict referrals. After you have done a good job once, work on broadening your relationship.

Develop your niche. Pick an industry or client group that interests you – from dentists, woman-owned businesses to candy makers – and identify yourself with it. The marketing you do in that area will serve your whole practice. I know a lawyer in Chicago who knows all the produce distributors, writes articles for their magazine, goes to their meetings and gets all kinds of work from them.

Get on the lecture circuit. Get active in the trade association that most of your clients belong to. Chances are they could use a good speaker on legal topics; volunteer to help on the association's program committee and offer to be a speaker. There is nothing better than being the voice of authority in a room full of potential clients.

Write articles. Offer to write articles for a trade association publication. Or write a column about your legal specialty for the local weekly newspaper or a business newsletter. Find a web site that is visited by your clients and write articles for it. Your byline should include all your contact information.

Invest in good marketing materials. Your business cards, stationery, brochures, Web site, announcements, invitations, presentation materials and even invoices should all have the same design. You need to have memorable materials to show prospective clients. List your Web site address on all your materials.

Establish a web site. They really do bring in business. People today find lawyers,

accountants and consultants by using Google and Yahoo. Your site doesn't need to be fancy or expensive. But it must describe the kind of clients you represent (list business by their industry type) and specific examples of the work you've done for them. Make sure your bio (with a photo), address, phone and E-mail address are easily located.

No random acts of lunch. Market with premeditation; call people who can refer you business and take them out to lunch. You're going to eat anyway, so don't eat at your desk. Invite real estate agents, accountants, lawyers at larger firms, insurance brokers and bankers. Also, contact your professional school classmates, to find out what they're doing and let them know you can handle their referrals.

Develop an E-mail mailing list. Start with family, friends and professional school classmates. E-mail is cheap, fast and effective. Include links back to your Web site. As your list grows, you can start to send your contact list legal alerts, money-saving tips or a newsletter. Every message should include a signature block with your contact information and a tagline about what you do.

Get marketing advice from the LawMarketing Listserv at www.LawMarketing.biz. You'll find discussions on marketing conferences, practical articles, books to read and forms to use. It's the go-to site for marketing for professionals.

The trick is to do the kind of marketing you like. If you don't like giving speeches, then write articles instead. This way you'll be doing the practice development you enjoy and will be naturally good at it.