

Best Short-Term Marketing Tactic for Gaining Family Law Clients: The Family Law Seminar

Over the years, we have seen, that the most successful marketing tool for generating new family law clients over the *short-term*, has without question, been the seminar.

And it's not even close.

That is not to say that seminars are the be-all and end-all when it comes to marketing the family law practice. Far from it. When it comes to legal marketing, there are a lot of things that seminars cannot accomplish, most of which fall under the headings of "long-term" or branding. But if I needed to pick up a handful of new clients, in just a few weeks, and had limited financial resources, implementation of a seminar would be the basket in which I would put my eggs.

There are a number of reasons for this, the most important of which is the fact that seminars offer the opportunity to connect with potential clients before, during and after the actual event.

Let's take a look at each of these in turn:

Promoting the Seminar

Family law firms and attorneys should understand that the benefits of a seminar for the public are not limited to the interaction such events allow. Promotion of the seminar itself has value - - even on those occasions when it does not attract a large number of attendees. That is because publicizing the event still generates awareness of the firm. That a potential client elects not to attend can be a function of anything from apathy or fear, to simple logistical conflicts. But regardless, even in not attending, there'll be viewers, readers, site visitors and listeners who will be exposed to the firm name nonetheless.

That's just one reason. There are a number of others. Unlike image-oriented marketing, promoting a seminar is time-sensitive. This means that you will probably only have to be "out there" for a relatively short period of time (translation: less financial outlay). Our experience has been that such events can be successfully publicized from 2-3 weeks prior to the actual date. Seminars also lend themselves to a myriad of ways in which to reach the individual contemplating or involved in a divorce. These include advertising, press releases, email blasts, announcements via social media, pay-per-click and an announcement on the firm web site itself. Finally, depending on the content of the seminar, the event may be a good way to publicize the firm's special knowledge or interest in a particular segment of family law (e.g., Gay and Lesbian domestic partnerships).

The Seminar Itself

Seminars provide a combination of benefits that most other marketing tools cannot. They offer the opportunity for a potential client to actually begin a relationship with the attorney. The “immediacy” of the moment is second only to a one-on-one consult. The information the attorney provides is invaluable to the individual most often hungry for anything that will help him or her get through the process more painlessly. Seminars create a non-threatening environment. (Remember, all of this is ‘old hat’ for you, but usually quite intimidating for the potential client). And finally, seminars offer the attorney and the firm a forum for touting their “expertise” in particular areas of the law.

Clearly, the single most important variable in determining whether your seminar is successful in attracting new clients will be the actual event itself. In planning this, aside from preparing the actual content, there are three questions one must invariably ask:

What kind of a client do you wish to attract?

There are many family law practices that seek out any and all kinds of clients. There are others however, that focus on attracting specific segments of the overall population. For example, a firm may emphasize serving mostly those with a high net worth. Or it may have particular success in attracting clients of one gender or another - - or of one sexual orientation or another. Whatever the target market may be, the determination of the target audience will have significant impact on the content of the seminar itself.

Where should you hold the seminar?

Keeping with the example noted above, a determination to seek out high net worth individuals may suggest charging for the seminar, thereby screening out those whom the firm may not wish to represent. Similarly, one should have a good understanding as to the types of clients the firm is most likely to attract and to the geographical locations to which such prospects will be most comfortable traveling.

When should the seminar be held?

Finally, your choice as to the date and time of the seminar will have some bearing as to who does and does not show up. The middle of the day probably will not be an attractive time for most working professionals. It may be however be exactly that, for non-working mothers of school aged children. Be aware of holidays – not just national holidays that impact everyone, but also those holidays that have special significance to religious or ethnic segments of the population.

After the Seminar

Opportunities for promoting the firm both before and during the seminar are a plenty. But there are also opportunities to do likewise after the event as well.

“Keepsakes,” in the form of brochures, Case Information Statements, summaries of relevant state statutes, articles, (even the proverbial refrigerator door magnet), etc.,

all lend themselves to being maintained by the prospect or passed along to others also seeking family law counsel.

Seminars can be publicized following the event as well, especially if you've provided a little "twist." For example, if you had decided to charge for the event, you might have also elected to allocate all or a certain percentage of the proceeds to a relevant cause –perhaps a women's shelter, or a special program for children of divorce. Handing over that check to the non-profit becomes an event unto itself, replete with press releases and photo opportunities. If you've thought ahead, you can have your seminar video recorded and archive it on your web site, thereby extending the presentation's life still further and potentially reaching other prospects who had been unable to attend. Finally, depending on the nature of your event and the situation of each attendee, seminars can be a way to build on the firm's database of prospects.

Obviously, the importance of creating a seminar that's informative, captivating and that sheds the attorney/firm in the best light possible cannot be overstated. That being said, the greatest opportunity for maximum success comes in a careful planning of not just the event itself, but of all pre and post-event activities as well. Done right, seminars can often be a great way to jump-start the family law practice.