

Where to Put Your Marketing Dollars Now

By [Sharon Berman](#)

As time and money are never plentiful, getting a good return on your marketing investment is always a challenge, regardless of economic conditions. Given today's plethora of ways to market, including vehicles that didn't exist several years ago—it's even trickier to allocate your marketing dollars wisely.

One thing that hasn't changed, however, is the fact that optimum marketing depends on not just one technique—rather it's a mix of tactics, which is referred to as the "marketing mix." The tactics in the mix range from your website to speaking engagements, e-newsletters, published articles, search engine optimization (SEO), and many others. No scientific formula exists for determining your marketing mix. It varies from firm to firm, practice area to practice area, and from year to year. Therefore, establishing the most effective mix for your firm is a matter of continually identifying the activities that will obtain the desired results in your target market. So, given the ever-expanding range of choices, where should you be investing your marketing dollars now? Consider the following factors as you evaluate your options.

Foundational Elements

While the range of marketing tactics is sure to expand each year, one thing will always remain true: successful marketing initiatives can only be launched from a solid foundation. If you haven't taken a step back recently to analyze your foundation, you are reducing the chances of maximizing your marketing investment. Your analysis should consider what services you are delivering, your ideal client, the ability to articulate the value clients derive from your services, your



points of differentiation, and similar foundational elements. Identifying these parameters need not be an exhaustive or paralyzing process, but it's important to be thorough enough to achieve clarity on what you want to communicate to your target markets, and how you are going to deliver your message effectively and consistently.

Another foundational parameter is knowing where your *leads* are coming from, and which of them are being converted from prospective to actual clients. For this purpose you need a simple system that tracks which marketing activities are generating leads, not just the source of actual clients. While it's important to know where your clients are coming from, you should also know which of your marketing activities are generating opportunities to establish client relationships. This information, in turn, will guide your marketing investment decisions, as well as further analysis if necessary. For example, if one of your tactics is generating prospects which are not converting into clients, you can dig deeper to find out why. Is it because the tactic is inappropriate or the quality of the leads is poor? Or, could it be that you need a new "sales" approach or business development training for some or all of your attorneys?

Creating a Marketing Culture

The right time to invest in creating a marketing culture is now—regardless of the economy or time of year. Such a culture has to be more than a cheerleading exercise; it has to reach the core of your firm. It is founded on the understanding and solid commitment to the fact that everyone plays a crucial role in delivering client service as well as in rainmaking. Business development and client relationship training allow you to effectively deploy your sales force—your attorneys—and extend your reach.

Monitoring the actions and results will allow you to see who is truly motivated to develop business and might warrant a further investment. You may find that you have people who are skilled and dedicated to the legal work, but have no talent or interest in anything else. Depending on the direction you intend for the firm, your current team might be in need of adjustment. The sooner you recognize what needs to change, the more quickly you can take steps to start moving toward your goal.

Upgrading Your Website

With your foundation established, an appropriate next step might be to upgrade and enhance your website. Much more than yesterday's "brochureware," today's website has to be an up-to-the-minute reflection of

(continued on back)



Sharon Berman is principal of Berbay Corp., a marketing consulting firm specializing in working with law firms. She can be reached at berman@berbay.com.

Where to Put Your Marketing Dollars Now *(continued)*

your firm's identity and capabilities. In addition to complete current practice area descriptions and biographies with specific examples of the work you do, the site has to feature news and recent results (such as transactions closed, settlements negotiated, etc.), leadership positions, new hires, references to media where your attorneys were quoted, e-prints of your attorneys' by-lined articles, and your blog if you have one.

In many cases, it's not necessary to start from scratch to develop an enhanced website. You may be able to expand on what you have by updating information, adding more depth to the copy or creating a News page. If your navigation needs to be updated or upgraded, this can also be done without jettisoning the entire site.

While a new, well designed, shiny website can instill pride in your attorneys, and despite the fact that technology has made it much simpler to develop websites, be aware that its development will require a lot of work and attention from everyone in the firm. It may take much longer than you anticipate, and during the development process if you're like most firms, your current website will remain static for many months. For this reason, sometimes an upgrade is a more realistic choice for the next six to 12 months than starting over.

Repackaging and Leveraging Materials

Similarly, when it comes to hard-copy marketing materials, it may be wiser to invest in leveraging and repurposing what you already have than creating totally new

collateral from scratch. Explore, for example, how you could repackage some of your work to support your expertise in a particular area or to discuss a trend from a public relations angle. Let's say, for instance, that you're a commercial litigator who doesn't specialize in a particular industry, but you happen to have three noteworthy settlements in one industry. If this is an industry with potential, it would make sense to "wrap" these three together and use them to launch or reinforce your marketing to this industry. You could add a page to your website discussing your expertise in this area, or create a one-sheet that outlines these settlements and emphasizes your understanding of the industry's needs.

Further, you can reconfigure existing materials to increase visibility by positioning yourself or your attorneys as experts in a specific industry. In fact, marketing dollars often go farther when you invest them in highlighting your experience in one or two promising industries—without excluding other areas of course. Then, as you gain multiple experiences in other industries, you can reuse and extend the materials you've already created.

Another way to leverage prior efforts is to draft and distribute press releases about recent transactions, victories, new hires, etc., or to do a "roundup" press release talking about several victories or transactions that have something in common. They need not be blockbusters, but just demonstrate depth in an area or the fact that clients are consistently turning to your firm to do this work. The need not be front page material; you are using the press release to tell a

story about your firm on your website, LinkedIn, etc., and stay in front of targets. When the releases are newsworthy, send them to the media.

Finally, presentations are ideal for leveraging. You can post announcements on your website before and after the talk, convert it into an article and pitch it to the media, and post links to it on your LinkedIn or Facebook pages.

Staying Committed

As you're considering various options for investing your marketing dollars, three factors are important to keep in mind: resources, commitment and consistency. Only put your money into tactics you can commit to consistently given available time and resources. For example, it doesn't make sense to launch a blog if you or your attorneys aren't interested in contributing to it on an ongoing basis. Similarly, advertising only once or twice in a monthly publication won't make an impact, just as evaluating the results of an e-newsletter campaign by the first distribution alone won't show its potential. And while search engine rankings will only continue to grow in importance (more quickly for some practice areas than for others), SEO is an ongoing effort. It requires persistence and commitment to get on the first page of Google search results and stay there. As you move forward with new initiatives, assess them against the foundation you've developed, keep to your course and avoid distractions. Commitment and persistence will ensure that your marketing investments will yield maximum returns for the long-term. ■

Reprinted with permission from the September 1, 2010 online edition of The Recorder. © Copyright 2010. ALM Media Properties, LLC. All rights reserved. Further duplication without permission is prohibited. For information, call 415.490.1054 or pryplewski@alm.com

For more information on law firm and attorney marketing, contact Berbay Corp:

Phone: 310-405-7345

Website: www.berbay.com

Blog: www.blog.berbay.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/group

Twitter: [@BerbayCorp](https://twitter.com/BerbayCorp)

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/sharonberman

Email: berman@berbay.com