

Six Keys to Becoming a Recognized Expert in Less Than 180 Days

Now the first thing that I want to talk about is just the brief caveat. If you'd heard us talk before you recognize that when we use the word expert or specialist in this presentation we're not talking about in the legal or ethical sense. We're talking about in the marketing sense where people perceive you as an expert; they perceive you as a specialist. So we recognize that that is a protected title in the field of law and you need to have certain credentials and certain certifications in order to call yourself a specialist in a particular area. So you just want to kind of keep that in mind as we go through the course of the presentation.

In your practice area and especially in major metropolitan cities there's a lot of competition and it's not getting easier for small and solo law firms. It's not getting easier even for the bigger law firms, but it's so important to recognize that the competition is tougher than it ever has been before.

We're going to talk about several different ways to do that today and it's very important to understand that even though you are a great attorney it's just not enough in today's competitive atmosphere. You know your practice area inside and out, but being a great attorney does not mean that you will be financially successful in the field and in the practice of law.

In fact, every single one of us could point to dozens of attorneys we know are really good at what they do yet are absolutely struggling for new business right now, and have been for quite some time. To build a financially successful law practice, it's necessary to be a great attorney, but not sufficient.

What I'm going to do is to share with you the strategies that top rainmakers use all across the country to get ahead of the competition, to position themselves as leading experts in their geographical area.

Law Firm Marketing Key 1: Leveraging the Power of Press Releases

The very first law firm marketing strategy I want to encourage you to use is press releases.

A press release is a written statement sent to the media for the purpose of announcing something news worth. For the purpose of legal marketing, it's a short article, typically 400 to 500 words, that gives your opinion, viewpoint, or perspective on a topic of interest to your target market.

A press release is made up of four parts: headline, overview, body, about us section. Use the headline to get attention. The overview tells exactly what the press release is about in one paragraph. The body explains the specifics and the about us section is a short bio of your law firm and contact information.

One of the most important parts of using press releases to market your legal practice is to make sure that there is an angle to it. Make sure there's something different about

your release. In fact, some of the best coverage that we've gotten from press releases has been when we've taken a contrarian view.

For example, I remember one attorney told me he wrote a press release on why Britney Spears should not have her parental rights revoked which is very controversial. You could write a press release about how big companies should not be held accountable when their medical devices fail or when their products fail. There are many different ways that you can take an angle on something.

Once you have written your press release you need to submit it online. We recommend www.PRweb.com.

In fact one of my clients, what he does is every time he sends out a press release he waits until it's published on PRweb.com and they'll send it out to like over 20,000 journalists all across the United States. It's an incredible tool for \$100, \$120, \$140 dollars, that's an incredible bang for your buck, and it stays on there forever. In fact if you type in my name, "Stephen Fairley," it's spelled a little odd so you have to spell it right, but if you type in my name into Google you'll see one of the top spots is for a press release that I sent out in January of 2006. It's still ranks very well on the internet for my name because press releases hang around forever which is a great way to build links back to your website and also to get your phone number out there. So I recommend PRweb.com, it's a great resource.

And let me give you a little tip on this. If you're going to send out press releases, do some research and I've included some sources in your workbook about how to write a press release. If you're not sure and you want some help or you want a professional to write a press release, give us a call or send us an email. We have four or five copywriters that write press releases that we can send you information about and get you hooked up with those.

I would say this, when you send out a press release, don't send it on Fridays or Mondays. Those are the worst days to send it out because everybody who's sending it out on Friday is trying to get in the Sunday newspaper. Everybody who's sending it out on Monday are the people who didn't get it into the Sunday's newspaper and are trying to get their story into Wednesday's newspaper. So the best days to send out your press releases are generally Tuesday and Wednesday or a Thursday.

Let me just start off by saying there are a number of fallacies and myths about press releases.

One is that they're really only for big firms. That's not true. A big firm actually has a harder time writing a good press release than a smaller firm. Because in a bigger firm

there are so many people who are vying to be in the press release and so many different angles that you have to take into consideration, it almost always never ends up getting actually done.

In smaller law firms you might only have one or two attorneys that need to comment on the case or get a quote for the case in order for the press release to be written.

Another myth is that press releases just don't work for small law firms. Well, that's not actually true either. In fact, we recently had an attorney at small law firm that sent out their very first press release. They had never used this tactic before.

The attorney sent out a press release on identity theft and what they found with identity theft is that it's a hot topic. You can barely even open a newspaper these days without reading about how somebody's identity was stolen. It's a very hot topic and his press release was picked up by a major newspaper.

The attorney was interviewed for the newspaper article and because of that interview they landed dozens of new clients over a thirty day period and the newspaper even called them "one of the leading Southern California lawyers on identity theft." You just can't buy that kind of publicity. That happened from a single press release. That kind of results may not be normal, but it does happen sometimes and in fact we didn't expect that to happen either.

We had another client, an associate we were coaching on our Rainmaker Marketing System and she had been practicing for a number of years, but never quite had a large enough book of business to become a partner. One of the strategies we used with her was to issue a series of press releases to build her online presence.

This attorney was in a very niche market, but she sent out a press release that was picked up by a leading business magazines in New York state read by tens of thousands of business owners in and around New York City. She was quoted as one of the leading legal experts in the field of law about her particular topic. Directly because of that article she was able to pick up two very large clients who over the course of a year she was able to bill them in excesses of \$500,000 dollars each and she was able to take that book of business and within six months go from being an associate at a mid-sized law firm to a partner in about a fifty person law firm in New York City. That was from issuing a press release. Now again, that is not typical, but it does happen; it has happened to other attorneys as well.

Here's another benefit to using press releases to market your law firm, and this is one that it's so powerful that I just can't believe why more lawyers don't send out press releases, and that benefit is that Google loves press releases! I don't know why, but very consistently when we send out a press release about a specific topic within 24 to 48 hours it's in the top twenty position on Google for our specific key words.

For example, we recently sent out a press release for a client of ours in California that sued General Motors and within 24 hours after sending that out if you typed in "GM Lawsuit" or "General Motors lawsuit," they showed up in the top five position out of 200,000 or 300,000 websites.

Google loves press releases and we've been able to use that to get fantastic results. I've literally issued a press release at 9:00 in the morning. By 5:00 pm in the afternoon

the press release is already indexed by Google and coming up within the top ten, top twenty positions. So it's a very, very effective law firm marketing strategy. We would recommend that you write at least one press release per month. If you're a growing practice then we would recommend that you write three or four a month just depending on how many press releases you can crank out.

Now I've listed about nineteen different ideas for press releases. I'm not going to go through all nineteen. You guys can read a lot faster than I can talk but I do want to give you some ideas about what do you write press releases about? Because attorneys say well what's the format and what do I write it about? Well it could be about a number of different things. One of the most powerful is to tie it in with a current news event.

So for example, let's say you're a divorce attorney and you handle high profile divorces or white collar divorces. Let me ask, are there any high profile divorces that are going on in the news right now? Is there anyone who has either celebrity status or semi-celebrity status that is getting say, their children taken away in a custody hearing. Well, how about Britney Spears.

Now you may say, "I'm not representing Britney." It doesn't matter to the media. What matters is that as a family lawyer you could comment about that issue that's taking place in a current news cycle. So for example, I've had clients that practice family law and say in their press releases, "If I was handling this case, here's three or four things that we would want to make sure that we take a look at." You can write that in a press release and it's completely acceptable. In fact, you will see semi-celebrity attorneys like Gloria Allred frequently speak up about cases she is not handling as a "legal expert."

You could also talk about how certain things are affecting the local economy. So for example right now there's a lot of talk about the subprime lending crisis, the subprime mortgage crisis, and the state of real estate in the entire United States and one of the things that a lot of our real estate clients have had success with in getting in the press is turning that on its head. So for example one of our real estate attorneys in New York City, he wrote an article, a press release called "There's No Such Thing As A Real Estate Bubble."

Well now wait a minute. All the press talks about is how the real estate bubble is popping or has popped in most areas. Well his whole thing was there's no such thing as a real estate market because by definition real estate is local. So the market in Manhattan is completely different than the market in New Brunswick. It's completely different from the market in Vegas or Florida or Stockton, California. So there is no such thing as a national real estate market. It's always a local market with local economies and local politics and local jobs. So just by debunking that he was able to get some great press on that.

Also, you could conduct a poll or a survey. Now if you work with businesses this is a great way especially if you work with say business owners. You could poll half a dozen of your clients. Now this could be an informal poll. You could just ask them a series of two or three questions. "From your particular perspective, Mr. or Mrs. CEO, is the economy in a recession or is it in a depression or is it on its way up? Is the economy good or bad? What are you doing to hedge against the potential of a recession? Are you hiring more people? Are you letting people off? Are you having a hiring freeze?"

There are many different things that you could ask them but just ask them three or four questions, write it up in a press release and talk about a local survey was done of local business owners in four different industries by Attorney XY and Z, and you can easily put some data into that.

The media loves polls. Look at the election cycle. There's always a new poll, every single day coming out about something. Who's on top? Who's fallen behind? Who's gained? So they love polls. They love surveys especially when it's a niche market or a specific geographical limited area. There are many different ways that you can write a press release, many different topics you can write a press release about. Many of you are rated in Martindale-Hubbell like AD rating or whatever. You could write a press release about how you were awarded the AV rating on Martindale-Hubbell. Anything that is newsworthy that can get your name out there.