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Paula Black has advised law firms around the globe on everything from powerful and innovative design to marketing strategy and business growth. She is an award-winning, Amazon-bestselling author and the force behind **In Black & White** (inblackandwhiteblog.com), a blog dedicated to clear, straightforward advice and open discussion of legal marketing issues. For more information on Paula Black, her books and her company please visit paulablacklegalmarketing.com.

Don't Just Survive...THRIVE: 8 Legal Marketing Actions for Smart Lawyers

Don't wait for opportunity to find you... create your own. In this economy it's not uncommon for even the busiest legal professional to be facing a certain amount of free time. But here's the secret: we need to look at this time as opportunity rather than challenge.

Here are a few ways to turn free time into business development...

1. Clean up your contact list.

Take an hour to go through your contacts and get them up to speed. Use the Internet to update information, add new acquaintances and make personal notes to help you remember specific details.

2. Reach out.

As you're perusing your list, send off a note to those contacts you haven't been in touch with in a while. See what they're up to—you never know who might need your services.

3. Take stock of your marketing materials.

Do you have strong materials to leave behind for potential clients? Put together folders with a firm brochure, your bio and any publications or articles relevant to your clients and your practice. If you don't have any...create some!

4. Enlist some help.

If your firm has a Marketing Director, schedule a meeting to discuss ways you can help each other. They may need new content for the website or have an idea for a publication you can contribute to, while you can get some help revamping your bio or other materials.

5. Collaborate with your peers.

Fellow attorneys can be a great source of referrals. See what attorneys in other practice areas are working on (within your firm and outside)—they may have work for you as well.

6. Read up.

Take the time to learn a little about legal marketing. From blogs to books (including my own “Little Black Book” series!) there is a plethora of information out there to inspire and educate.

7. Evaluate your client service.

Everything matters when it comes to keeping clients happy. Take the time to observe everything from how the phones are answered to how often clients are updated on cases. Enlist secretaries, paralegals and assistants and make the necessary changes.

8. Get out of the office.

Check in with organizations you’re a member of and see what kind of events they have coming up. Prepare a quick (semi-rehearsed) introduction that references your points of differentiation and get going. Nothing going on within your memberships? Ask around via friends who are members of different organizations and invite yourself along.