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Stress-Free Ideas for Relieving Marketing Panic

Your firm is putting pressure on you to bring in business. You want to bring in business but the idea of asking for work literally terrifies you or flat out does not agree with you. If you absolutely, or even just a little, detest the idea of trying to bring in business, help is here. There are easy things you can do which do not involve putting your ego out there and suffering a possible rejection.

- **Hang out with clients you already work for.** Existing clients are often called "the low hanging fruit" and there is good reason for that. Once a client engages you, they really want to have a successful relationship with you. They want to keep their work with you because it is an enormous hassle and use of valuable time to start the attorney search process again. Therefore, visit your clients off the clock. Take a tour of their businesses, learn how they make money and meet their key people. Remember, they already like you. They will like you more if they feel you are invested in their professional and personal world — and have taken precious time to actually get to know them better. You are not asking for work but visiting to do better work for them in the future.

What you should do now: Schedule an off-the-clock visit to one client (or more) each month. After the tour or visit, send follow-up thank you notes to those you met with and include some helpful observations that may make them more money, reduce litigation exposure, save workforce time and somehow make a difference in their world.

- **Get involved in 1-2 groups you are passionate about and be active in them.** When you participate in a business, industry or even recreational group, people see you in action and therefore come to know you and like you in a professional sense. The object is to go deep in the organization — and by this I mean do not just sign-up and go to a few meetings — but really participate: network within the group, speak to the organization on an interesting topic, host events, assume a leadership role, etc.

What you should do now: Scour your list of clients to see what groups or boards they are a part of and consider these first. Ask your clients if you can attend a meeting with them as a guest. Then join the group if you like what you see and begin to do something that furthers its objectives. And do it with a smile.

- **Get your alumni directory from your alma maters and mine them for people you like who don't compete with you.** Set up a lunch — perhaps once a month — to discuss what kind of customer/client they would like and how you can help each other. Go to alumni functions from your high school, college and law school. This can include lectures, sports games or museum tours. Start a dialogue with 2-3 people tops at the events and stay in touch with them afterward. Find out what they do, what their interests are, how things are going in their lives. Be an interested person — listen and ask questions —

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and you will learn how you may be of help to them. And, don't forget to have a great elevator speech that really indicates how you help people: "I help (businesses/people) when (x pain/problem occurs) so that I can (save them money, get a great remedy, keep them out of jail, save taxes ...")

What you should do now: I am not kidding — practice the elevator speech in front of the mirror till it rolls off your tongue. Call your law school, college and high school and get a copy of your alumni directory. Set up lunch dates with one alum a month for the next six months.

• **Become known publicly as an expert for your favorite kind of cases.** Write, speak, blog, help reporters with stories and more to keep the Internet, airwaves, your firm and LinkedIn bios humming with evidence that you are top in your field. Co-author with an inside counsel. Organize a CLE you can do in-house for clients or non-competing fellow law firms. If you write articles for your firm newsletter, make sure they show up on your firm and LinkedIn bios. Join groups on LinkedIn that your clients are a member of (hint: look at their profiles) and join online discussions where you have something meaningful to add. Place articles on JDSUPRA. Use the best and most professional photo of yourself on the Internet or on any article you write because it projects an immediate and strong impression of you. So many lawyers are using photography that puts them in the worst light.

What you should do now: Contact three clients and ask them what they read to stay current with their industry or profession. Consider writing for one publication. Ask your clients where they go for professional education — what conferences, chambers of commerce meetings and other types of gatherings they attend and consider speaking to one of those entities in the next six months. Try to get one article or speech scheduled. You never have to give away the store in either activity and you should never write/speak in legalese. Everyone — no matter what they do — wants short, practical tips.

• **Listen and ask a lot of good questions — don't sell.** Don't look at any person you meet as a target that you have to sell to. Rather, use every conversation as an opportunity to learn about them. Ask open-ended questions and listen. You will learn so much about someone else's life/business that way and the kind of help they may need in the future. Then follow-up with them in a way that is meaningful to them.

What you should do now: Look at your list of referral sources, friends, relatives and people you buy a service from and try to take one out for coffee or a meal each week. Have a "listening" meeting. That's right. Calendar a day each week to learn more about someone you know in case you can be of help in the future. And then follow-up with them. And follow-up again.

So throw away the stress ball and do these simple things. Let me know how it goes. I am rooting for you. Get up, get started ... get going. •

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