KLA Marketing Associates

Make 2014 Your Year to Tweak (not Twerk)

By Kimberly Alford Rice

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Here we are early in the year, optimism is high and we are committed to making 2014 a more prosperous year. Then we ask, "how" and shake our heads. What can we do differently this year than last year and have a better result? Clearly, we do not want to do the same thing as last year and expect a different result…how Freudian would that be?

An area in which I see so many law firm clients struggle is in the analysis and measurement of their development efforts. Are they engaged in high impact endeavors in the first place which will support their overall development growth goals? First, they rarely have systems in place to assist them in the imperative of measuring what business development exercises have been worthwhile.

How many times have I heard "I've tried publishing articles and even giving talks, and they just don't work for me" and my thoughts go quickly to "did this lawyer leverage the actual business development opportunity appropriately to qualify as a success and, as importantly, how do they measure the "work" part? The answers are frequently "no" and "they don't".

Many lawyers generally know what they need to do to grow their practice (foster business relationships) but they need to tweak the execution and the follow up steps which are imperative to growing a client roster.

Marketing legal services requires planting many seeds. Some germinate, others do not, and the ones that do may take a long time to harvest. The germinating period may distort our perception of what works.

How Can You Know?

To think with the CEO hat of your practice on, do you know quantitatively the source of your business? Or, have you analyzed your intake reports to know for sure. Does most of your business originate from client referrals, from other lawyers, from competitors?

These questions can often signal a serious flaw in the business development efforts of many lawyers. Many don't have a system to measure which activities produce the desired outcomes. Instead, they rely solely on their memories.

Examine What Works for You
By analyzing your client list, you may stumble upon some powerful marketing data. If you have ever shared a meal with a client once a matter concluded, you might trace subsequent referrals from the goodwill which was generated by spending a few hours off the clock to reinforce that relationship.

Your analysis may reveal that opposing counsel has referred some of your best clients after a court fight where you parted ways amicably as a result of you reaching out post court fight. Lawyers who know the quality of your work first hand may be (or could be) a powerful source of new business. They may think of you first when a conflict arises. How do you nurture those relationships?

Really, Out of the Blue?
How many times has a client called you up totally unexpectedly? How did they find you? Do you know? If you do not know definitively, you need to find out and then track all sources of your clients going forward. Include "source of business" on every client and referral intake, and instruct your staff to do the same. To gain an accurate insight, you must gather this data over the long term.

Tracking is one of the most meaningful ways to learn "what works" when marketing your practice and/or firm. Otherwise, you are just guessing and investing (or not) in marketing activities which may or may not produce results.

Track Efforts and Analyze Results
In addition to including the source of business on your intake form, what else can you do to decipher marketing activities which are contributing to developing a prosperous practice?

Website Inquiries. First, if your online presence (website, social media, attorney directory listings, etc.) is not producing real clients, you may want to reassess your focus on these efforts.

If you receive a regular stream of potential client website inquiries, how many are you converting? What do you know about them? How did they land on your website? What search terms did they key in? What attracted them to your site - - how much time did they spend on your bio, on the service areas? You need to record this data with as much detail as possible, looking for trends and commonalities.

Repeat Client Work. What do you do to get and stay connected with your active (and inactive) clients? How often do they hear from you? Do you keep them apprised of all your service offerings so they know the full range of your practice and may refer you to others?

Referrals. How did the client know the referral source? What is the nature of their relationship? How well do you know the referral source and should you take steps to foster a stronger connection for reciprocal referrals?

Finally, analyze the top 10% of your top clients and assess what you presently do and can do to expand those relationships. What tweaking can be done for new matters?

The more data you can gather, the more it will help in your business development efforts. When you see quantitatively the time and touches it take to land a new client, you will be more assured with the next prospect.

Finally, look for patterns of which activities bring in top tier clients, and which tend to attract less desirable ones. That requires you to "grade" your clients so you can recognize the common traits of the more desirable ones.

When you get new business and you can recognize it developed, you'll know how to repeat those steps!