

Four Easy Ways to Recession Proof Your Law Firm

It's official. Our economy is in a recession. And, there's no question that it's hitting law firms where it hurts. The question will be how the impact is felt in your law firm and on your career.

If you are a solo or small firm lawyer, you have a lot of control over that, but only if you don't allow the fear to put you into paralysis and instead get out there and take action now.

Here are four things you can do immediately to help ensure that your fortune is increased during this recession and not decimated as many of your competitors will be:

1. Market Yourself Effectively & Efficiently

Now is the time to pick up your marketing in a big, bad kind of way. While most of your competitors will be pulling back, you can double your marketing ROI by doing more.

The key though is to make your marketing consistent and diverse.

Consistent means you are doing the same set of things each and every month, without fail.

Diverse means that you are doing more than one thing. Hopefully a lot more.

It means you're using direct mail, advertising, and seminars to generate leads. Plus, you've got a referral strategy in place that doesn't involve you wasting time with pointless networking luncheons. You aren't relying on any one thing to bring in a more than 2-3 new clients per month, but instead a handful of things to bring in 2-3 clients each per month.

2. Engage More Prospects at Higher Fees

If you can increase your engagement rate so that nearly 100% of the people who come into meet with you end up engaging your firm at higher fees, you will see a huge impact on your growth in the direction you want things to go.

I know it seems counter-intuitive to talk about raising your fees during a time when everyone's worried about money. But, that's always been one of the secrets to my success. Do the opposite of what everyone else is doing.

By raising your fees, you will actually become more in demand and you'll need to see fewer clients and be able to provide more service to your clients.

Now, the key is that you've got to be engaging the prospects who call your office. The key to that is to make sure that your intake staff is using a proven script designed to get the prospects into the office and that you are using a script that ensures you are engaging nearly 100% of the people who come in.

If you aren't engaging nearly 100% of the people who make it into your office or if you are dealing with a boatload of cancellations each month, there is a solution.

3. Focus Your Business On an Underserved Niche

No matter what your practice area is, you should consider focusing on a niche for all of your marketing efforts. All of the best and brightest marketing gurus out there say that the more you can laser focus your marketing to a small subset of people, the more successful you will be.

In most cases, lawyers make the mistake of doing what all of their colleagues are doing and what happens is you begin to see a lot of activity in certain niche demographics and very little in others.

Here's an example from the estate planning area, which you can extrapolate out into whichever practice area you are working in.

The vast majority of estate planning lawyers are either marketing to elderly people, the ultra-wealthy, or not niching their marketing at all. This leads to a very crowded marketplace with most lawyers appearing exactly like the guy next door and not very much for prospects to differentiate one from the other except on price.

That's how commodities are created.

I took a different track when I built my practice from scratch 5 years ago.

I niched my marketing and focused almost entirely on reaching families with young children, an extremely underserved market who is in need of estate planning services.

Here's what was so interesting. Once I committed to focus my marketing efforts on the niche of reaching young families, I began to attract all sorts of other prospects outside of my niche, including elderly folks and the uber-rich.

4. Add On a Lucrative Practice Area

Some practice areas are suffering right now, while others are thriving. Bankruptcies are on the rise, I'm sure divorces will be increasing as families crumble under financial pressures. If you are in a practice area that is not currently thriving, consider branching out into something complementary that may be able to serve your already existing client base.

Estate planning is one of the best practice areas to add on to your practice because it's easy to learn and everyone you know needs it, no matter what the economy is like. The one thing you can't avoid is death and taxes, but through a lifetime relationship with your estate planning lawyer, you can make both of them a lot less scary.

Here's the key though, if you are going to add on a complementary practice area, make sure that you don't delude yourself into thinking that this is going to save your business if you are blaming

the slow down of your current business on the economy, but you aren't marketing and haven't already done all you can to expand your existing business. Make sure you have a marketing plan in place to get the word out about your new offerings and how they can benefit your clients.

And, be sure that the practice area you are adding on to your business is easy to learn, systematizable, and has a proven system you can follow for maximum success as quickly as possible.

The long and the short of it is that if you are innovative, focused and creative, this recession can be just the opportunity you need to take your business to a whole new level of efficiency, effectiveness and profitability. Things are changing anyway, why not make this an opportunity to become the lawyer you've always wanted to be?