7 Powerful Law Firm Marketing Strategies for Following Up with Your Contacts

If you are like many lawyers I have worked with, you have tried many things to market your law firm. You have tried giving seminars and presentations, going to networking events, writing articles, talking to old law school buddies, meeting with potential referral sources, and sending out holiday cards to clients to remind them of who you are.

I have coached and trained over 6,000 lawyers in virtually every practice area. The difference between financially successful attorneys and struggling attorneys is often found in their follow up. Top attorneys clearly understand the fortune is in the follow up. They plan ahead and lay out a clear game plan for reconnecting with and following up with every person they connect with.

When marketing your law firm, there are four different groups of people you come into contact with and which group they fall into will usually tell you how you should follow up with them.

Leads are people or companies who are unqualified and may or may not need your services or even be able to afford your services. You may not even know their name. Leads come from a presentation you make to a local trade group, or by visiting your website, or perhaps by sending you a question in an email.

Prospects are people who have some level of qualification. They have either expressed a need for your services or they fall into a category that you believe has a high likelihood of needing your services. They may have meet you at a networking group, at one of your seminars, or been referred by someone who thinks you may be able to help them. The major difference between leads and prospects is two-fold: you know who they are and you have a good reason to believe they need your services.

Clients are the third group you need to follow up with. A client is someone who has paid you money. Do not confuse prospects with clients. If someone hasn't signed an agreement and paid you money yet, they are not your client.

Referrals are the last group you need to follow up with as part of your law firm marketing plan. They may be current referral sources, former referral sources (they haven't sent you any new leads or prospects in the last 12 months) or prospective referral sources.

Here are 7 powerful tips to remember when planning your law firm's follow up strategies:

1. **Don't do it all by yourself.** Most of the follow up should be done by your staff, not you. Don't have a staff? Then outsource it to a virtual assistant. You should remain focused on bringing in more business, meeting with prospects and signing them up as clients, and billing your clients. Attorneys are not in business to chase down people they meet, especially unqualified leads. Focus on making money by bringing in more clients and then by billing them for your services.

2. **Create your written plan ahead of time.** Do not wait until the last minute to create your follow up plan. Think about it ahead of time. How do you want to connect with them after your event (trade show, seminar, presentation, article, networking event, etc). Write down the exact steps your team will take to connect with them. Write down roles, responsibilities and time frames. Go over it with your team just before the event to answer any questions and make sure they know their role.

3. **Have a plan for obtaining their full contact information and then have a back up plan.** Do not rely on someone else giving you their contact information in a timely fashion. They may or may not. They may have better things to do or an emergency might arise or they may forget. Always, always have a back up plan. Make sure you get all their contact information including: full name, mailing address, phone number, and email. This will be of great value later on.

4. **Use a database to keep track of your contacts.** Do not rely on the stacks of business cards you have on your desk. Put them into a database like ACT or Goldmine or zoho.com. I heard of an attorney who went to a very important networking event and gathered about 30 business cards. He left them on his desk and when the cleaning crew came the next night they threw them away as trash. Have someone on your team input them into a database as soon as possible.

5. **Use multiple methods to connect with them.** Some people read emails, some people read letters, and some people respond to phone calls. Use at least two of these methods to connect. If possible, use all three. For example, have your assistant send out an email the very next day after your networking event. Have a letter sent out the day after that and three days later have them follow up with a phone call to set an appointment for you.

6. **Remember the Rule of 48.** The Rule of 48 refers to the amount of time you have to follow up with a qualified prospect after you meet them before they forget why you are contacting them. In most cases, you have 48 hours to make the first contact or you can forget about it.

   I remember meeting with an attorney who still had a list of "qualified prospects" he met at a networking group six months ago. I told him the only thing they were qualified for is the trash. The fortune is in the follow up so do it quickly. If you don't have time, make time or don't bother. Even a quick email is better than nothing. Here's a helpful tip: whenever you have a big event coming up, clear two or three hours first thing the next day from your schedule and use that time to start the follow up process.

7. **Plan for the long-term.** Even though you usually only have 48 hours to start the follow up process, your law firm marketing plan should include specific ways you can stay connected to your leads, prospects, clients, and referral sources over the long-term. Whether it's a monthly newsletter, a quarterly phone call, or a legal update you send out. Once a semi-qualified person is on your list institute a process to stay connected with them at least seven to ten times per year.

For law firm marketing, the fortune is in the follow up. You need to have a system in place to connect with and stay connected to your leads, prospects, clients, and referral sources. Why not take some time this week and meet with your staff to develop a written system for following up with people in a timely, systematic fashion.