

Marketing by joining an association

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Joining an association and actively networking in it can be an excellent source of new business. But if you talk to lawyers about organizations they belong to, they'll say, "I belong to the bar association, a legal specialty group and my alumni club. I'm also on my kids' school board. None of them generate any business, so obviously this technique doesn't work."

The reason the approach isn't working is because the lawyer has spread himself too thin. I see this happen a lot. When it comes to joining an organization -- and what I'm referring to is a trade association, a business group, the Rotary -- you've got to pick one and go deep.

If you are real overachiever, pick two. But the point is that you shouldn't be a member of five organizations because you'll merely be surfing all of them, not making any kind of an impression and not really getting to know anyone. Of course they're not going to generate any new business for you.

Ask for guidance

Before you decide to join an organization, involve your mentors, allies and clients and ask them, "What organizations should I become active in for business development purposes?" Let them choose one for you. You may have to do a little shopping around. In my experience I've gone to a number of trade association meetings and it sometimes it turns out it really wasn't a source of new business.

But I didn't stop networking. I found another organization that I wanted to get involved in.

When you finally find that one that's full of referral sources and clients, that's the one that you want to stick with. You need to commit to going to all the meetings. You need a calendar of all the dates. You've got to go to the boring holiday party and the boring installation of officers. You've got to be at every meeting of the organization. "Ninety percent of life is being there," as Woody Allen said.

Make a point of meeting the active members. If you go to every meeting you're going to find the regulars and these are the people that you want to spend time with. At a meeting, your goal is not to warm a chair, have lunch and listen to the speaker. **Your long-term goal is to get on the Board of Directors or become the President.** That's the only reason that you're joining this organization, because we're doing this with business development aforethought.

Your short-term goal should be to take charge of an event, a program or anything that's going to put you in front of the crowd. Find out what committees, special interests groups and

activities are important in the association. For example, there are a lot of business clubs in Chicago and they have an interest group for every topic you could possibly imagine.

The association may have a listserv, they may have a bulletin board or they may have an online social network. **Whatever they've got, get active in it.** This why you can only belong to **one** organization, because you can't be active if you belong to five organizations. If you concentrate on *one* and really make your presence known, it's going to generate new business.

The association is where you're going to find all of your opportunities to speak and write articles. You're can be immensely helpful to the program director by volunteering to speak, helping find a speaker or facilitating a panel discussion.

And same thing goes with the editor of the newsletter, who is probably dying for material. This creates an opportunity to come forward and say, "I can help you fill the hole." They're going to be grateful to you for a long time. And it's going to give you all sorts of exposure.

Typically organizations work months in advance to find speakers so if you have a topic now, offer it. For example, I'm booking speaking engagements right now six months in advance. That's how far ahead organizations plan.

Present and recycle

Once you've written a piece or made a presentation, recycle it. An example for you to emulate is attorney Robin Lazarow, one of the best recyclers I've ever met. When we first ran into her she was an associate marketing all-star, practicing law in Boston, Massachusetts. She developed a core speech on an attention-grabbing topic -- something that was hot news to her clients.

She avoided the mistake that most lawyers make, which is preparing four different talks for four speaking engagements. This is a huge burden. Instead, be like Robin Lazarow: she picked *one* topic and then took it to four *different forums*. She gave the same speech over and over and over again.

Her area of expertise was employee benefits so she spoke on the topic at the offices of a client, which was an insurance consulting firm. She got invited to give the exact same talk to a human resources association. And then there was an organization of small businesses that wanted to hear her talk.

Number one, this approach is a great way to get known for something in particular. Number two, you'll become very comfortable and smooth with your presentation because you're giving it over and over. Then she began recycling. She basically took the high points of her speech and boiled it down into a checklist that was available for clients or attendees only. So clients and potential clients had to come out and see her to get this checklist that everybody wanted.

She found out there was so much of a demand for the checklist that she started an e-newsletter distributed by email and it was basically, "Here's where I'm speaking. Here's the hot topic. Oh,

and by the way, here is some of the points I'm going to be covering -- things that you'll want to hear about -- so come to my talk."

Key takeaway

If you want new business, focus your efforts on a single business organization that is composed of clients and potential clients. Consider cutting back on the organizations that don't generate any new business. Your short-term goal is to be visible in the organizations, and your long term goal is to get on the Board of Directors.

Once you've given a talk, start recycling it. Turn your speech into an article; turn the article into a checklist; turn the checklist into an e-newsletter. The more you recycle your marketing efforts, the more effective they'll be.