

The Ten Most Effective Law Firm Marketing Techniques

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Larry Bodine

Many lawyers don't get new clients and files because they don't do enough business development activities, or they waste time on the wrong activities, or they don't get face-to-face with potential clients.

I've helped attorneys generate more clients and get more business by training attorneys what to say, what to do and how to be in the right place at the right time. I also work with lawyers one-on-one and help them develop personal business plans, and then I work with firms in doing follow-up to assist lawyers who are doing business development overcome any hurdles that they might encounter.

What you'll read next are the most effective marketing techniques. These tips are based on scientific research that I have conducted where we asked 377 marketing partners and marketing professionals in the professional services fields what they did that worked. I'm going to cover 10 particular points.

Number one: You have to spend at least 2.5 percent of your gross revenues on marketing.

Otherwise, you're just pretending to market. That 2.5 percent does not include the salaries of any of the people that you may have hired to perform the work. This is money that is spent on generating new business, on taking clients out to lunch, on visiting clients - it's all direct marketing activities. You have to put your money where your mouth is. If you're not spending 2.5 percent, you're not being serious about marketing, and you're not going to get any results.

The second technique is to put video on your website. The reason that I bring this up is you may have noticed that YouTube is sponsoring presidential debates. It's the number four most popular website online on the internet. That's because roughly 30 percent of the population has grown up with the internet always present in their lives. Just as I grew up with fax machines, touch-tone phones, and microwave ovens - they were something I always accepted as being there. All of these people - the 30 percent of the population that has always had the internet - are looking for video. That's what they expect. It's very easy to record a video and put it online. If you don't have any video on your site, you're really missing a good trick. It's a great opportunity to present how you look, how you talk, what you're like, and make yourself more attractive to clients. It's a great business-getting technique.

The third point: Don't waste any money on marketing that is not measurable. If you can't

measure it, don't do it. For instance, advertising and public relations are widely used, but after you've spent \$20,000 on it, do you have any way that you can check to see if it actually generated any results? I don't think so. What I would suggest you do is pursue the techniques that you can measure. That would include blogs. You can publish up a blog and see how many people visited. On a blog, you can also see how many people commented. If you really have to advertise, take out a banner ad. A banner will tell you how many people took a look at your banner and how many people clicked on it. The same thing is true with email newsletters. It's possible to send out an email newsletter and get a report on how many people actually opened it, and if there are links inside it, how many of the links were clicked on and who clicked on them. That's all measurable stuff.

Number four: When it comes to business development, start with the low-hanging fruit, and that is your own clients. These are people who love you, they trust you, they send you work, they are sending you checks. It's incumbent upon you to get to know them better to see if you can generate additional files from them. It's much easier to open a new file from a current client than it is to originate a brand new client. Again, this is something that you can measure. You can measure the number of times the attorneys in your firm have actually visited the client, how many times they had lunch with a client or a referral source. Or, if you have an event at your firm, you can count the number of attendees, keep track of all their contact information, and then trace in the new matter reports how many of them turned into new files. The bottom line is you should start at the *beginning* of any sort of marketing initiative by figuring out how you are going to measure it. If you don't do that, you have no way of knowing whether it succeeded or not.

The next thing is to cultivate referral sources. A lot of lawyers get most of their business from referrals, and that's a wonderful thing, but the point is that it doesn't just happen all by itself. The people who get these referrals are lawyers who cultivated them.

- Where I would start is with clients. Again, these are people that you're doing work for, but *unless you tell them that they're supposed to send you new work* and that you would welcome this new work, they won't know that they're supposed to do so. You actually have to tell them.
- Step two is you tell them what kind of work you're seeking. If you're doing a lot of commercial real estate transactions and they're sending you matrimonial cases, you haven't explained the kind of work that you're looking for.
- There are lots of other referral sources besides clients. There are people that you will know in other professions such as investment brokers, accountants, and bankers. These are all people that can send you business so long as you tell them that you would like them to and what kind of work to send.
- The same thing is true with law school classmates. These are people who know you. If you're a litigator, obviously you don't want to approach the litigators because they're in

competition with you. Approach all the people who have a transaction practice. Chances are they're going to have some sort of a transaction that went south, and they're going to need your help.

Number six: Get active in a trade association, and get on the board of directors. You'll notice that I said, trade association, and not bar association. You should join an association of clients. You want to get in front of a room full of clients, people who can potentially hire you. You find out about these trade associations by asking your current clients what meetings they go to. Then it's a simple matter of saying, "I'd like to join you at the meeting. Would you introduce me to your friends?" These friends, of course, are all potential clients for you. It's no good just going to the meeting; you have to be *visible*. Your goal when you join a trade association is not to be just a face in the crowd. Your goal is to get on the board of directors. The way you do that is you seek out the president and you volunteer. You volunteer to help put together programs; you volunteer to help with the newsletter; you volunteer to help in any sort of activity that is going to lead to a board position.

Number seven: Only after you've done all of these things, then pursue target clients. What I mean by "target" is a business executive whom you already know. You don't have to make any cold calls. Whom you're contacting could be a neighbor. It could be another dad or mom at a little league game. I originated a Fortune 500 company by just talking to another dad at a little league game and asking him what line of work he was in and what kind of business problems he faced. You can meet targets in the religious organizations that you go to and the clubs that you belong to and the charities that you're active in - these are all people who have businesses - that's what you looking for - and they all have careers. Ask them questions about it.

Number eight: If you do have a business plan, write it down. It's not real until you write it down. What you want to be writing down is whom you're going to call, when you're going to meet them, and some sort of an outcome that you're expecting to have. The idea of writing it down is now you've moved it on to your calendar. Once it's on your to-do list, you're going to do it.

Number nine: A question I get a lot is "How much time should I devote to business development?" Point number nine is I would recommend 200 hours a year. That may sound like a lot, but when you break it down by week, it's really only four hours a week. You can meet somebody for coffee at Starbucks in the morning. You can meet a client. You can meet a referral source for lunch. You can go to a trade association meeting in the evening. All of this you can weave into your ordinary to-do list, and before you know it, you've devoted 400 hours. I guarantee you are going to get way more back in new business and new clients than the value of the effort that you devoted.

My closing point, number ten, is to track your results. If you are undertaking a marketing initiative such as, "joining the local business owners club, make a point of writing down the people that you want to meet before you go. After you've meet your targets, asked them about their business challenges, later you can to go back and ask yourself, "Did this work? Did I get a

new file?" I recall working with a lawyer who was spending money on radio ads, and he was reaching a huge number of people, but he examined his new clients and none of them came from the radio. He wasn't getting any new business out of it at all, so he discontinued it. That's the approach you have to make, but you only will be able to do that if you track your results.

So count to ten, pick the ideas you will pursue, and just do it. The more activities you choose, the more clients and revenue you'll bring in.

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