

DON'T HIT AND RUN IN SOCIAL MEDIA

One of the marketing messages I have developed to communicate with my clients is called Myrland Marketing Moment. As the name implies, it is a very short marketing message that only takes a moment to read. I typically post these on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Plaxo, and soon, by video, audio and enewsletter.

One Myrland Marketing Moment I shared the other day was:

“If you want to be successful in Social Media, don’t hit and run. Relationships take time.”

What do I mean by hit and run?

Social Media are simply some of the tools we have available to use to network and develop relationships. I think most will agree that relationships are important to our business. Without them, we give our clients no reason to buy from us a first time, a second time, to recommend us, to enjoy doing business with us, or to even remember us once our service has been delivered. In other words, it makes business much more difficult than it should be.

Whether you are developing relationships with potential clients virtually (online) or actually (in person), there are 5 ideas I’d like you to keep in mind.

1. Relationships take time.

How often do you hear stories about two people meeting, hitting it off in the first moments, deciding they want to get married that night, and sharing everything with one another immediately?

Exactly....I don’t either! It doesn’t happen that way in real life. It might in the movies, but you and I aren’t actors, we’re real-life trusted advisors to our clients.

Be realistic about developing relationships. Don’t Tweet a few times, post one or two updates on your Facebook wall, write one blog post, record one podcast, or update once or twice on LinkedIn and expect it to bear fruit. Be patient.

2. Be Strategic.

It’s very easy to dive in to Social Media head first. Someone presents a tool to you, you think it sounds interesting, you have a few minutes, so you go ahead and give it a try. Next thing you know, you’ve made a few friends and followers, but you realize this is not only taking a great deal of your time, but you aren’t interacting with anyone that even resembles a potential client or referral source, much less someone from whom you can learn more about your area of expertise.

I'm not saying you shouldn't dip your toe in to Social Media if you are curious. By all means, go right ahead. Just adjust your expectations of ROI accordingly. Only when you become strategic about your marketing activity should you allow yourself to have expectations of reasonable outcomes.

Be strategic. Develop a brief marketing plan that addresses goals, target clients, messages, competition, communication with these audiences, etc. Let this drive your Social Media activity, as well as the rest of your marketing activity.

3. You Can't Start Too Early.

The other day on Twitter, a lawyer I follow shared his thought that recent law school graduates should not be networking to develop business. He thought they should be taking baby steps by learning how to practice law first.

I'm here to tell you I have a lot more faith in lawyers than to think they can't handle learning how to practice law and talking to people at the same time. Lawyers can not only handle it, but because relationships take time (see point #1 above), they must do it if they expect to grow their practice to the point where they are thriving at some point in their career.

If you haven't started networking, talking to people, and developing relationships, do it today. Be consistent, be regular and be strategic.

4. Learn how to listen.

I know, you've read this statement a million times, but it's critically important to your practice, your business and every relationship in your life.

Pretty strong statement, huh? Yes, it is, but it's true. How many times do you walk away from a conversation with a person feeling a complete connection to them, feeling that you could tell them anything and they would understand where you are coming from? You know what I mean...that uncommon chemistry that causes you to think you can't wait to spend time with them.

There are many factors that go in to feeling that way about a relationship, but one that is undeniable is that this person took the time to listen to you with every sense, and every cell in their body focused on you. They weren't forming their next sentence while you were talking. They weren't looking at their phone, the clock or the person who walked in the room behind you. They asked you questions about you. They followed up on statements you made, not letting them hang without clarification or understanding. These are all very important components of being a good listener.

When using Social Media, spend time listening, or observing, first so that you understand the tone, usage and needs of your followers (Twitter), friends (Facebook), contacts (LinkedIn and others) and fans (Facebook). As you spend time listening in Social Media, just as in face-to-face

conversations, you gain a much deeper understanding what is on the minds of those with whom you are interested in talking. Understanding helps us serve others' needs better.

5. Don't wait for someone else to do it for you.

It's easy to get busy with management, learning a new phone system, figuring out that dreaded CRM software, billing, hiring an assistant, etc. Before you know it, you realize you don't feel very good about your practice because you've spent most of your time on the mechanics of running your office, and not enough on developing relationships with clients and potential clients.

You're frustrated because you know you didn't go to law school to network, but to be the smartest, wisest lawyer you can possibly be for your clients. Marketing is a distraction, much less this business of Social Media and Social Networking.

The most important part of this point is that being the smartest, wisest lawyer is also part of marketing. Everything you do that your clients see is actually marketing what you do. It is sending a message to your clients about what it's like to do business with you.

But there's more. All these new and old tools that are waiting for you to help you communicate and build relationships with clients, and to help you build your practices for the future aren't going away. You should strategically take advantage of them. In increasing numbers, the world is becoming more connected via Social Media. Your clients and potential clients are finding their way to these tools, and you should too.

No one else is going to do this for you. You can't expect your marketing professional, your marketing consultant, your assistant or your partner to develop your relationships for you.

I learned long ago that it is my responsibility to drive my career and my actions. I can't sit around and wait for someone else to help me make the connections I need to become successful in my career. Sure, I can ask for help to make a connection, but that still starts with my taking the initiative to ask for that help. If there's someone I want to meet, it's up to me to decide that, to figure out how to approach them, then to go through the process to make that happen. I am in the driver's seat.

The next time you are frustrated because Social Media just isn't bearing fruit, or it isn't developing the relationships you thought it would, ask yourself if you have truly put the amount of time in to Social Media to understand and use it strategically. No one else is going to do it for you. They can show you how, but they can't develop the bond, or the chemistry, that helps clients want to do business with you.

Don't be a hit and run in Social Media. Relationships take time. Put enough of you in to the equation to expect enough of others.



Nancy Myrland, President, Myrland Marketing, is a Social Media Consultant, Speaker and Trainer, as well as a Professional Marketing Advisor. She works with law firms and their clients to help them grow by strengthening their relationships with their clients through the understanding and *strategic* use of Social Media. She started Myrland Marketing in 2002, and has over 20 years of strategic marketing, management and sales experience.

Nancy has spent a great deal of time immersing herself in the worlds of New, or Social, Media and Traditional Marketing, and understands how to wisely and efficiently blend the two areas to help you accomplish your goals.

Nancy is innovative, passionate, loyal, strategic, wise, and has a depth of knowledge to share with her clients that comes from working in sales/business development, in management and marketing in corporate America with Time Warner and L. M. Berry, and in law firms and other professional services firms.

To find out more about Myrland Marketing, or to hire Nancy to come to your firm to speak or train, read her blog, or follow her in Social Media:

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