



I Didn't Go To Law School To Be A Salesperson

By Terrie S. Wheeler, MBC



Practical Tips To Develop New Business

To attract new clients, consider that both sales and marketing are part of the mix. Lawyers quickly acknowledge marketing is not something they learned in law school, and that *doing marketing* doesn't come naturally to them. If lawyers are really honest with themselves, most engage in marketing activities because they feel they *have* to, not because they genuinely enjoy the process. However, there are always exceptions. It's easy to conclude that the lawyers who are successful in marketing have inherent strengths in this area; they were born to market. The truth is, the vast majority of lawyers we work with simply want to do what they do best, practice law. They hope that word of their expertise will spread near and far: "If you build it they will come!" Enter the article you are reading right now; the purpose of which is to remove the mystique and mild distaste of sales by focusing on innovative and results-oriented strategies you can implement in your practice today. Consider the following tips:

- 1. Dispel the advertising myth.** Contrary to popular belief, there is *not* a direct correlation between spending a lot of money on marketing and attracting new, high quality clients. In fact, many lawyers who throw money at marketing hoping to advertise their way to success end up disappointed with the results. The reason? Successful sales and marketing is about relationship building. Ask your best clients how they found you. It is highly likely they were referred to you by someone they trust.
- 2. Know the difference between sales and marketing.** Marketing is about the messages you convey, and sales is about asking the right questions. Marketing is what you do to build name recognition in the marketplace. You are marketing when you provide exceptional client service, add content to your website, write an article, speak to a group, make a referral, host an event, write a proposal, research a prospective client or referral source, and attend trade or professional association meetings. You market through your visual identity, being quoted in the paper, serving on a board, and engaging in social media.
- 3. Learn what sales for lawyers really means.** Sales is the art of asking the right questions – *not* the proverbial dog and pony show where you talk about who you are, your credentials, and what a fabulous

lawyer you are. Sales is not about you. Rather, it is about the person sitting in front of you, and your ability to help that person solve a problem they are facing. Sales involves asking probing questions, listening and digging deeper. As a lawyer, you are inherently good at sales (yes, I really said that!). Law school trains you to be good in sales by helping you learn the art of conducting due diligence on a business deal, leading discovery in litigation, selling your case to a jury. You will be amazed at what an exceptional salesperson you are when you start a consultation with, "So, tell me about your situation," or "What problem are you trying to solve?" or "Let's talk about why you are here today."

- 4. Develop your questions.** When you are asking questions, you are in control of the conversation. Create a list of questions you can ask a networking contact. Consider questions like:
 - Tell me about your business or practice.
 - What do you enjoy most about your profession?
 - What do you like to do when you're not working?
 - How has your industry come through the challenging economy?

After you have spoken to a contact for a few minutes, one of the best questions you can ask is "How can I help you?"

When you take the pressure off yourself and acknowledge that success in sales is actually about asking the right questions, versus *performing*, you will realize how important it is to do business with people you like, trust and respect. Stay focused on the person you are talking to, ask great questions, and stay in touch with those you would like to work with in the future. Watch for next month's article on "How to Develop a Compelling Elevator Speech," and learn how to sell the value of your services when you introduce yourself.



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