



Successful Marketing for Newer Lawyers: *What you Didn't* Learn in Law School

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Generally speaking, after graduating from law school, you face a daunting task: finding a job so you can begin to pay off your law school debt. While many of you landed in law firms, government positions, or in corporate legal departments, a fairly significant number of you decided to hang a shingle and start your own practice.

This article is geared toward lawyers in law firms and the solo practitioners who quickly realized their law school educations did little or nothing to prepare them to attract clients, develop referral sources, run a law practice, become a partner in a law firm, or build their personal name recognition in the marketplace.

It is with this backdrop the following ideas are presented to you – the top marketing tips for newer lawyers.

Focus on Your Contacts

Most successful lawyers can trace their best contacts, clients and referral sources back to law school or college. Stay in touch with this important group! It is easier than ever with Facebook and LinkedIn to stay connected to

your best contacts.

Find a Mentor

Whether you are in a law firm or are a solo practitioner, find a lawyer more senior than you who will agree to mentor you during your first few years of practice. Don't wait for your law firm to suggest a mentor. Rather, find a lawyer you genuinely respect and approach him or her directly. If you are a solo practitioner, check with your state and county bar associations to find out what type of mentoring programs might be available.

Join the New Lawyers Section

Join your state or county bar association's new lawyers section. Building relationships with other lawyers early in your career will greatly benefit you down the road. Many lawyer's best referral sources are other lawyers.

Attend CLEs in Your Key Practice Areas

There are many benefits to attending CLEs, including the fact that you need to stay current on the areas in which you practice. In addition, attending CLEs allows you to network with other lawyers in your area. In fact, many CLEs will also attract your prospective clients and referral sources.

Define Your Top 10 Lists

Make marketing manageable. Identify your top 10 best clients, referral sources and prospective clients. If you have been practicing for a few years, don't forget about your past clients. Create a tracking system to methodically follow up with your contacts during the year. Invite them to lunch, send them a note, refer them a client.

Do Not Accept Door Clients

Many of you know that a "door client" is anyone who happens to walk in your door. This concept is particularly important to solo practitioners. Know the criteria of your very best clients and then spend your marketing time attracting more of the same. Many times door clients require dabbling in the law. Don't dabble, focus.

Find Your Niche

Pick one or two areas of law in which you want to become known as one of the top lawyers in town. Spend your marketing time posting relevant content on social media, writing blogs, populating your website with new content, writing articles and making presentations in your niche. Done over time, you will become known in the areas within which you focus and will develop a profitable and rewarding niche.

Refine and Practice Your Elevator Speech

Make sure you have a creative and relevant response to "So ... what do you do?" Make sure your elevator speech communicates the value you bring to your clients. Don't say, "I'm a corporate lawyer, or I practice family law. Rather, "As a corporate lawyer, I work

with business owners on all the legal aspects of managing their business so they can focus on revenue growth." Or, "I help families through the challenges faced in divorce by finding the right external resources for them to work with throughout the divorce process."

Volunteer in Your Community

Not only will you be helping humanity, you will be building relationships with other like-minded individuals. Also consider serving on a nonprofit board. Other board members will see you as a timely, responsible board member which builds your reputation as a lawyer.

The Rules Related to Marketing

You passed the professional responsibility portion of the bar exam. Now it's time to keep the Rules of Professional Conduct top of mind. See my article "Sweat the Small Stuff: The Ethics of Marketing Your Law Practice" in Attorney at Law Magazine June 2016.

Be Responsive

The easiest way to a client's heart is to show them you care about them by responding same-day to their email and voicemail messages. There are so many ethics violations filed against lawyers for activities that are 100% preventable just by being responsive to client calls and emails.

As a newer lawyer, your biggest priority is to make the transition from law school into private practice. The activities above are designed to augment the fact that most of you never learned how to "do marketing" in law school.

Terrie S. Wheeler, MBC, is the founder and president of Professional Services Marketing LLC. Terrie presents at various law schools in the Midwest where she has the



opportunity to let new lawyers know what to expect when they transition into private practice and realize they need to learn to attract clients. You can reach Terrie at (320) 358-1000, or TWheeler@psm-marketing.com.

