

Be Where Your Clients Are

Ten Tips to Maximize Trade Association Involvement

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Many times our clients tell us they are involved in several different trade associations – most of which they rarely attend or if they do, their attendance is very sporadic. We understand that it can be overwhelming to attend a meeting with people you don't know, and that the meeting times are not always convenient (early mornings or after work). However, being a member of at least one trade association can provide a steady stream of new business if you incorporate the 10 tips below to help you choose the right association, become an active, high profile member, and personally engage with your A-level clients and referral sources.

#1 – Research Associations Before You Join

There are literally thousands of trade associations across the country serving every industry niche

you can imagine. As you consider an association membership make sure the association attracts the targeted businesses, industries or referral sources you want to meet. If you need help identifying the right association to join, take a look at the Gateway to Associations. There you can search for associations that cater directly to those you are trying to reach in marketing by using specific search parameters.

#2 – Talk to Your Clients

Ask your best clients what trade organizations they belong to and find value in. Ask your client to invite you to an upcoming meeting so they can introduce you to other members. Your client's endorsement will make a great impression. Your time is valuable, and you want to make sure the association you join will be well worth your time out of the office.

#3 – Bond With the Association Executives

Association executives are highly motivated to deliver value to members. Make it a point to build relationships with the president and executive director. They will serve as the conduit through which you will be given other opportunities in the organization. Association executives have a vested interest in your membership and will be willing to do their best to ensure that you

connect with the right people in the association – and get plugged into the right events, committees and sponsorship opportunities.

#4 – Attend a Meeting or Two as a Guest

The executive director will generally invite you to attend an upcoming meeting as a guest. This will provide an opportunity for you to watch for important cues including how engaged association members are, the overall culture of the organization, how warm and welcoming the group is, and what level of substantive information they cover at monthly meetings.

#5 – Join a Committee

Based on suggestions from the executive director and association president, connect with one or two committee chairs such as membership (meet and recruit new members), publications (you can submit articles), programming (speak at a conference) or education (provide substantive content to members). Committee activities allow you to quickly build strong relationships with association members.

#6 – Commit to Becoming a High Profile Member

Being a high-profile member means that you attend every meeting possible, actively engage on a committee, offer to speak at events and write for the publication, and offer to serve as a resource to members. We encourage you to join one association focused on professional development (your state or local bar association or other legal industry associations where you can receive free or low-cost CLE credit), and one association that provides on-going opportunities to get you in front of your prospective clients and referral sources – a trade association. Many attorneys express frustration after being in an association and feeling as though nothing has come from it. The rule of thumb is that you must give to get! It's not enough to simply be a member of an association and list it on your biography. To really leverage and maximize your membership you need to commit to becoming an active, high-profile member of the organization.

“If you continue these actions consistently, over time you will become known as a leader in the organization.”

#7 – Connect With Members

As you continue attending meetings, reach out to people you are interested in learning more about; those that meet your criteria for A-level clients and referral sources. Invite them to coffee, connect with them on LinkedIn, add them to your firm's database and consistently look for ways in which you can help and support them. Remember the very best networking is based on asking great questions and focusing on how you can help the other person. When you develop personal relationships with members, you also remain in compliance with the rules of professional conduct related to direct solicitation.

#8 – Become a Trusted Adviser

Trust is built over time when you do what you say you will do, and when you offer ideas and legal problem-solving tips without the meter ticking. People assume if you are a responsible and dedicated volunteer, you are also an excellent, service-oriented lawyer.

#9 – Offer Your Expertise

Over time, as you build your credibility within the association by attending meetings and participating on a committee, you will begin to see ways in which you can contribute your expertise to the group by writing articles in the newsletter, joining a panel discussion, leading a monthly program, or even serving on the board. These opportunities only come to association members who have shown their value continuously throughout the year.

#10 – Sponsor Events

When the time is right, seek out opportunities to get the name of your firm in front of members by sponsoring events like golf tournaments, seminars, trade shows or other activities the association sponsors. Many firms make the mistake of joining an association and throwing money at every event they can. Rather, first become an active member of the association, then support the organization with your firm's sponsorship dollars.

Generating business from an association takes time, however if you follow these steps, over time association involvement can become one of your best business development sources.

You can watch our webinar on How to Maximize your Trade Association Involvement by going to www.PSM-Marketing.com and clicking on Free Webinars.

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