



By Terrie S. Wheeler, MBC

What? You didn't learn about marketing and business development in law school? Well, you're not alone. Aside from a few progressive law schools offering accredited classes that touch on marketing, sales, and the business of law, it's likely you didn't learn these important skills until you realized they were critical to your future success as a lawyer.

There are a few common traits I have uncovered in lawyers who seem to be natural rainmakers. First, many of them held sales positions in high school or college. One of the most successful corporate lawyers I worked with used to sell shoes. Others worked in their family business or on the farm learning what it takes to run a successful venture.

My theory is that the reason some lawyers are great at marketing and others struggle, is because of the hands-on experience these individuals have been able to leverage from their past. I tell

people I learned everything I needed to know about client service working as a tip-motivated waitress in high school. The good news is that marketing is an acquired – not an inherent – skill.

Why Work With a Marketing Coach?

For one, your coach is focused exclusively on you and your practice. He or she will also help you:

- **Think Strategically** – Adopt a strategic marketing plan for the growth of your practice.
- **Increase Your Confidence** – Gain influence in a variety of situations.
- **Learn and Use your Strengths** – Learn what uniquely differentiates you and lead with those strengths.
- **Create Focus and Accountability** – Create an implementation plan that you actually want to do!
- **Time** – Integrate marketing with daily work to maximize your time.

- **Build Relationships** – Create a system to nurture and develop your best contacts.
- **Stay Motivated** – Receive ongoing encouragement, inspiration and support from your marketing coach.
- **Measure and Evaluate Success** – Quantifiably measure the ROI of your marketing efforts and results.

Not Every Lawyer Should Work With a Coach

Before you hire a marketing coach, you must ask yourself if you are willing to make the commitment of time and money necessary to achieve success. Consider what lawyers who benefit most from coaching have in common:

Possess Personal Motivation – Not only will you have to pay your marketing coach, you will have to *do* what he or she recommends!

Are Willing to Develop New Contacts – As you know, marketing is a contact sport. The core of your efforts will be

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focused on strategic relationship building.

Are Interested in Creating a Niche – The most successful lawyers build upon what they are already (or want to become) known for.

Are Dissatisfied with Their Current Income – If you are happy with what you are making, you probably are not going to have the motivation to put consistent and persistent time into marketing.

Can Objectively “Grade” Current Efforts – If you had to assign a letter grade to your marketing efforts and results, what would it be? If it’s a B or lower, you might benefit from a coach.

Value Succession Planning – You don’t want to ride off into the sunset if you can maximize the value of your practice and sell it. A coach can help you navigate this uncharted territory.

How do you Find the Right Coach?

There are many experienced professionals out there willing and able to help you build your practice. Each person brings specific skills to the table. If you are serious about finding the right marketing coach for you, consider the following:

Industry Experience – Your marketing coach must have a deep understanding of the inner workings of the legal industry; particularly the Rules of Professional Responsibility related to marketing.

Chemistry – You will be sharing a lot with your marketing coach. You need to

feel comfortable with the person you are working with.

Creativity – You don’t want someone to apply a cookie-cutter approach to you and your practice. You need a fresh and creative approach.

Enthusiasm – You need someone who is going to be as excited about your success as you are.

Flexibility – Your schedule changes on a dime. You need a marketing coach who acknowledges this and allows you the flexibility you need to integrate marketing into your day-to-day practice.

Trust and Respect – You will be sharing personal details including your fears and insecurities related to your personal marketing efforts. Mutual trust and respect are critical.

Business Acumen – Marketing coaching is not just about logos, branding, and presentations. Your marketing coach needs to know enough about your business that he or she can help you negotiate a deal with a new law firm, determine if (or when) to leave your firm, and have the overall business skill and savvy to support you every step of the way.

While many lawyers become successful without ever having worked with a marketing coach, there are others who appreciate the high personal touch relationship a coach brings. If you find the right marketing coach, you will be putting your practice on the fastest possible track to growth and prosperity.



Terrie S. Wheeler, MBC, is the founder and president of Professional Services Marketing LLC. Throughout her career, Terrie has coached hundreds of lawyers in Minnesota and across the country. Terrie also serves as vice chair of the Lawyers Board of Professional Responsibility, and earned her master’s degree from the University of St. Thomas. You can reach Terrie at Terrie@psm-marketing.com or (320) 358-1000.



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- History of one or more falls
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- Orthopedic problems
- Diabetic neuropathy
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