



HOW TO PUT LAW & ORDER INTO MARKETING YOUR LEGAL PRACTICE

Whether you're frustrated with past marketing efforts that have been expensive, time-consuming, and haven't paid off...or you think you can't afford to take a sophisticated, results-driven approach to business development like the big firms do, guess again. While your firm may not have its own in-house marketing expert on staff or the generous marketing budgets that the larger firms enjoy, you can systematically and affordably attract more clients than you ever thought possible. It just takes a thoughtful strategy that leverages the laws of marketing, and an ordered approach to stay on track.

Laws of Marketing

First and foremost, marketing is NOT about brochures, websites, advertising or cold calls. These things may or may not be tools that make sense for your firm, once you've leveraged the laws of marketing.

There are two basic laws of marketing¹ that must be mastered by professional service providers who want to stop wasting time and money on ineffective marketing efforts. They are:

1. Build your base (carefully craft your message)
2. Reach out to your market (build and nurture relationships)

Here's a quick look at what each of these laws requires...

Build Your Base. This law means spending thoughtful time defining your firm's niche, developing language that grabs your prospects' attention, articulating what makes your firm stand out from other firms offering the same services, demonstrating your value, and illustrating your firm's authority to deliver better than all other choices.

Unfortunately, 90% of professional service firms ignore the law of "build your base" and rush to communicate about their firm without a carefully articulated message. This leaves your target audience unconvinced or, at best, confused about how your firm can serve them better than all others vying for their attention. Invest a little time in building your firm's base, and you'll be ahead of most of your competitors.

Reach Out to Your Market. This law involves developing and implementing a system of strategies to build and sustain relationships with your target market and current clients. They are executed both offline and online. They are done systematically and repeatedly. They work in synergy to create an unstoppable buzz and attraction to your firm that takes on a desirable life of its own, once you've put them in place. These strategies include things like networking, direct outreach (personal or mass mail), PR, articles and speaking, keep-in-touch systems, using technology to attract, develop, and retain relationships; tapping centers of influence, developing joint ventures, launching a client relationship strategy, using a customer creation system, pursuing a relationship selling strategy, introducing a win-win fee strategy, and developing next-level strategies for current clients.

Orderly Conduct

This is the hard part for most law firms...making marketing happen is a function of carving out the time from precious billable hours - not an easy task! However, you can do it, especially if you take a disciplined and orderly approach to staying on track. This means you have to...

Get focused. Schedule a meeting with key decision-makers in your firm to discuss making a commitment to marketing. You don't have to make any major decisions at this first meeting, except determine how much time you can commit weekly to your firm's marketing efforts. Start small (2 hours per person) and put it in your schedules. Then schedule your next marketing meeting to discuss the results of your homework, the attached Are You Ready for a TurningPointe? marketing assessment!

Get organized. Use the results of the marketing assessment to stimulate discussion about where to start. At this point, if you've not done market strategy and planning before, call in an expert. It'll save you lots of time in the end, since you'll START with a strategic marketing plan that makes sense for your firm and is realistic to implement.

Some basics to consider when developing your plan include:

- Keep it simple; don't take on too much at once. Spread out your deadlines.
- Identify a mix of short-term, easily implemented goals and longer-term, harder-to-implement goals. Build in some quick "wins" for an immediate return on your investment.
- Prioritize but be flexible; be willing to change dates or put things on hold when other marketing priorities make sense (which means you don't stop, you just shift).
- Identify the obstacles (people, time, money, lack of expertise, etc.) that could derail you and plan tasks for how to overcome them.
- Plan for how to make marketing a reward, not a punishment. Build in rewards for people who take time from billable hours to market.

Stay on track. At a minimum, guard one hour every week for a status check on your marketing plan – even if you're a solo practitioner, that means making an appointment with yourself! The mere act of focused thinking or discussion about marketing every week will make an enormous difference in your ability to attract more clients.

Once you have a smart plan in place that's realistic (see Get Organized, above), all you have to do is focus on taking one step at a time, then another, and another. Each small marketing task builds momentum and before you know it, you've implemented a major goal. The key is to keep moving...or if you stop, get restarted. It also helps to have "accountability" to an outside party, who keeps you on track through regular telephone and in-person coaching sessions.

The Defense Rests

So your practice has a stellar track record of client victories, you do good work that you care about, and you know your contribution makes a positive difference in the lives of your clients. What if you could reach more clients than you ever thought possible with all that you offer?

Apply the laws of marketing through an ordered plan of action that keeps you on track, and you will. Case closed.

References

¹ Middleton, R. Laws of Marketing TeleClass. Action Plan Marketing, Inc. 2003.