

Business Builder

Top 10 Tips for New Lawyer Business Development - *Marketing Mistakes to Avoid*

by Kevin W. Brown, M.B.A.

Attorneys often want to learn more about what they can do to increase revenues and build their firms' images in the marketplace. But what I hear recurring from them highlights what they are doing wrong.

Here are the "Top Tips" addressing the new lawyer marketing weaknesses that I encountered throughout 2011:

- 1. Fail to recognize that marketing is your "lifeline."** Without marketing, you don't have revenue. Cut costs in other areas that aren't as critical to the future of your firm.
- 2. Home-made marketing plan.** Having the drive to do things yourself is admirable but in marketing it can be extremely costly. Think of all the money that is wasted by following an ill-conceived marketing plan – advertising in publications that don't make sense, internet marketing that brings no results or unwanted inquiries, etc. On the other hand, a professionally-prepared Strategic Marketing Plan is a relatively cheap investment. For example, it can cost only the price of one advertisement!
- 3. Start-and-stop marketing.** Marketing programs should be consistent, year-round efforts. "Start and stop" marketing always produces mixed results. Consistent implementation maximizes your efficiency and effectiveness (and it is easier to rate the productiveness of an activity if it is carried through to completion).
- 4. Poor branding and differentiation.** You work

in a crowded marketplace of competitors offering similar services. As such, it is important to figure out how to make your firm distinctive. Don't make the mistake of "me, too" marketing.

- 5. Lack of a well-rounded marketing program.** Many firms lack a unified, cohesive, well-planned effort. An effective program encompasses many aspects of marketing. The entire marketing process should be considered with a marketing professional before determining the appropriate combination of methods to utilize.
- 6. Lack of training and ongoing coaching in Business Development.** Great sales opportunities are wasted by a lack of training and coaching in business development. Training can dramatically increase the closure rate.
- 7. Not recognizing how clients select you.** What causes your target market to choose you? Do you know? You might think so – but if you truly understood, your marketing program would likely be very different.

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Top 10 Tips for New Lawyer Business Development (cont'd)

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What causes your target market to choose you? Do you know? You might think so – but if you truly understood, your marketing program would likely be very different.

8. Working with business development firms that don't understand law firm marketing.

Does it make any sense to hire a firm with zero or limited experience in marketing a law firm? Marketing a profession is far different than a product or other services business. Don't waste money by hiring someone who has to learn on your investment.

9. Overemphasis on the internet. The internet is fantastic for many aspects of marketing and we use it all the time in helping our clients. But some firms put far too much of an investment in it without understanding how it can fit in with other marketing efforts. Ask yourself: Do your quality clients make buying decisions based on relationships and referrals or websites? If it is the former, then what are your programs for personal relationship marketing?

10. Waiting until the economy gets better.

Studies show marketing should continue during a recession. The biggest sales increases throughout the recession were experienced by firms that marketed more than others and that, almost without exception, sales and profits dropped off at firms that cut back on marketing.

Consider a commitment to business development.

There are two types of law firms in a recession: Those who say they “can't afford to market” and those who say they “can't afford NOT to market.”

If you don't market your firm, you may shrink or dissolve. Consider making a commitment to marketing your new firm. You will be in a much better position to weather the recession.

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