

# The Magnificent Seven:

## Handy Marketing Tips for the Legal Administrator Without a Marketing Department

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As a legal marketer, I have genuine sympathy for every legal administrator without a marketing department. The legal marketer's role within the firm has changed dramatically over the years. Recently, it has moved from a position of luxury to a necessity, a transition that happened virtually overnight. For the many firms without internal assistance, here are some helpful hints and tips to assist them in their marketing efforts.

- Ditch the firm brochure and invest those marketing dollars in a Web site that offers printable pages.

It is time to face the facts: Every law firm brochure, no matter how ornate, has a costly shelf life. The information that is listed on the inside pages of the brochure has been scrutinized, for many hours, by the attorneys who write them and the project managers who see the text through to completion. Once finished, the text is sent off to the printer, which will then bundle the information in a pleasing way for future distribution. When it is finally delivered, several weeks after the job was released, it will include fancy designs, images and elaborate paper.

Everyone will love it — for three months. Then, all of a sudden, the attorney pictured on page 11 will have left the firm, a new office will have opened, the firm will have changed its Web address or a new practice area will have been unveiled. Unfortunately, these well-crafted “masterpieces” become outdated in a shorter amount of time than it takes to make one.

You can avoid this issue entirely by utilizing a printer-friendly Web site that allows you to update information at a moment's notice. This tool will allow you instantly to produce and deliver the most current firm information to your target market. Users can download the information themselves, at any time of the day, or you can package the practice area descriptions and biographies and mail a hard copy to the target. Ideally, this “virtual” information can be printed in color on high-quality paper and be packaged for distribution to clients in under an hour. As a result of using this technique, your dollar will be stretched further.

- Centralize marketing efforts.

Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither is a marketing department. Marketing does not have a position on the management committee, but on some level it impacts every attorney at the firm. If you do not have the approval for an additional staff member to administer the department, be sure to seek out and form a marketing committee or at the very least, acquire a



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marketing partner. This position is critical in order to keep projects moving along and to adhere to deadlines.

The best candidates for this position should be individuals who are genuinely interested in legal marketing and who appreciate and understand the need for marketing, at least on some level. They must also fully understand the markets that your firm deals with and those areas in which opportunities exist to develop business. It also is helpful if the individual has a flair for creative thinking. Additionally, one of the most critical attributes for these candidates is that they have a strong voice to advocate for all marketing functions and needs. Assemble these people in an organized way so that internal political decisions can be handled from the ground up and in a timely manner.

- Get a CRM or other marketing database.

Customer relationship management (CRM) systems are cost-effective tools that assist users in managing customer relationships and customer data so that they have a better understanding of company assets, needs, wants and buying patterns. CRM systems allow individuals to see their business strategically by pointing out development opportunities for potential clients, as well as the opportunities for additional business from current clients. Similarly, using CRM software makes it easier to spot the holes and voids within your practice areas.

On a simpler level, a CRM will allow you to organize all of the firm's clients in one place so that there is a systematic methodology to all pertinent external communications and mailings. You can maintain information about clients,

industries, practice areas and your own attorneys.

In a dream world, your firm will invest the money up front in a system that is respected within the industry. However, if the budget will not allow for this, you also can develop your own organic database using an Excel spreadsheet or an Access database. A CRM system is often cost heavy during acquisition and implementation; however, they are highly cost-effective in the long run. Once the CRM system is up and running, it definitely will assist in making the much-dreaded holiday card season a breeze — for that reason alone, the investment is well worth its weight in gold!

- Streamline the new hire process.

Now more than ever before, the rate at which attorneys are moving from one firm to the next is skyrocketing. The national average for associate turnover is 17 percent. This information should not be a surprise to you as a legal administrator because you are seeing it happen firsthand.

From the perspective of marketing, it is imperative to formulate a standard process to transition attorneys as they arrive at the firm, as well as another plan for the transition as they depart.

Before a new attorney arrives, it is essential to obtain as much information about the individual as soon as possible. New attorneys, those fresh out of law school, should be the easiest to tackle because you can request all of their biographical information from the hiring committee. The challenge

often involves internal preparation and communication efforts related to new hires. Prepare a standard checklist that includes all of the necessary items for their marketing and business development needs including their previous web biography, their resume, information for their executive portraits and a sample of their business cards. Develop a descriptive biography that is in line with your firm's other attorney biographies.

Reach out to these individuals before they arrive on your doorstep. Share with them all that the marketing department has to offer, including the type of business development plans in place so that they may make use of them. Share with them your draft of their biographies so that they can make all of the necessary changes. Provide them with the contact information of the firm's photographer and anything else that might be a helpful effort for

them. New hires often will have some free time when they first arrive — so get in there as soon as you can, and strike while the iron is hot!

- Cross-market services.

Educate your attorneys, both new and old, and make them aware of everything that the firm has to offer potential clients and current clients. Remind them that a current client might be a potential client in another practice area. Highlight all of the firm's services, practice areas and the typical industries that the firm works with, and then make this information available to everybody within the firm on a public shared folder. Do not forget to update this information as new practice areas and industry specific targets unravel, and most importantly, communicate this information to all attorneys and staff.

There is no good reason for any satisfied client to look to another law firm to do work that your firm is capable of doing internally. Cross-marketing your services to your current clients and your own attorneys is one very easy and inexpensive method of acquiring additional business.

- Hire a good PR firm.

Public relations is a daunting task without the staff to oversee the necessary efforts. Small law firms have big successes that need just as much publicity as the other giants in town. Without the appropriate internal assistance, it is essential that you seek out a well-respected PR firm that has experience in the legal industry and knows the key players in the local, regional and national media. You need to provide the PR firm with the necessary information in a timely manner: big firm news, case wins or the recognition of attorneys to positions of leadership. Then, let the PR firm promote it.

Successful publicity requires a tremendous amount of time, the appropriate connections and plenty of other resources. A good PR firm does this type of work on a daily basis and knows the most effective ways to promote your firm. Invest in a PR firm before you actually need them. Choose one that is available to you in the event of an emergency.

- Get a brand and use it.

Choose a brand that represents your firm, and do not stray from it. In a market saturated with law firms, how does your firm differentiate itself from the others in your building? On your block? Within the city limits?

Nike slowly and successfully evolved into the brand (the swoosh) that it is today. Continuously communicating this information to your audiences increases awareness and recognition through repetition. Spend the necessary funds to determine your firm's differentiation. Ask your attorneys what makes your firm so different from the next firm.

Branding will assist in building your firm's reputation, and it also helps potential clients remember you and approach you. If you need help, do not be afraid to enlist the assistance of an outside consultant. •

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