

8 Powerful Cures for an Allergic Reaction to Marketing

I know that many of you reading this went to law school never giving thought to the idea of having to market your services. In fact, many of us would rather undergo root canal surgery than spend our precious time marketing and selling. Just the thought of having to do it causes an allergic rash to mysteriously appear all over our bodies. Can't we just be left alone to "practice"? After all, isn't practicing difficult enough? The long hours, demanding clients and time constraints, firm politics, and of course, dealing with opposing counsel on every nit.

Yes, practicing is hard. And it doesn't help that today the practice of law looks more like a business than ever before. With over 1 million lawyers in the United States alone, competition is fierce. Globalization, consolidation creating mega firms, increased utilization of request for proposals (RFP), budgetary caps on fees, practice groups switching firms to go to the highest bidder, marketing of legal service plans, self-help legal guides, mass demotions at large firms, de-equitization of partners, outsourcing legal services overseas, and new technology that commands 24/7 attention, are all altering the legal landscape. Practicing law may be a profession, but today's law firms are run more like a business than ever before. And like their counterparts in the business community, revenues and earnings drive major decisions.

The result of all this change is that just being a good lawyer or legal tactician is simply not enough anymore. If you really want to succeed in today's environment, you have to become a rainmaker and market your solutions. It is the only way you'll be in complete control of your professional destiny. Sure, you could bill an outrageous amount of hours, be a national expert in your area of the law, even a partner in a large firm, but these factors are no longer a guarantee of your financial and personal success. Deep down inside you know this to be true...unfortunate...but true.

And getting started is the most difficult part. An attitudinal shift may be in order. For many of us, marketing is seen as demeaning; time consuming and a waste of our precious time. And many of us dread the very idea of it. Yellow page ads, obnoxious late night cable commercials, or costly glossy brochures all serving only to gratify an attorney's ego rather than sell real benefits and value reinforce this negative view of legal marketing. Most of us know that today's typical legal marketing activities represent the opposite ends of the spectrum...either professional garbage about the impressive "image" of the lawyer, or raunchy ads about getting the client massive amounts of money for injury claims. And worse, they all look alike.

The reason the majority of us dislike marketing is that we were never taught how to do it in a professional and personally fulfilling way. And with the pressure to bill hours, how do we find the time to market? Even more, what tactics should we use that fits our personality and could even be fun? Let me assure you that when you know how, marketing your solutions can be easy and enjoyable...if you implement a few of these ideas.

First and foremost, determine what it is you really want to be, do and have with respect to your legal career. Failing to address these important and unique issues will render any

marketing strategies completely useless and boring. In other words, what do YOU want to do with your legal career; where do YOU want to do it, and what do YOU want your professional life to look? The answers to these three important questions explores what inspires and motivates you, what it is you stand for, what activities you love to do, what environment you want to do them in, who you want to serve, and what you want your professional life to stand for.

Second, you will need to adopt the mindset of a rainmaker, for being a rainmaker should be the most important activity you're engaged in and having a list of profitable and loyal clients should be viewed as your important asset. You are simply going to have to recognize that marketing is not selling your soul or compromising your ethics, but is the key that will dictate your future. A marketing mindset is simply the expansion of your value proposition and awareness into the relationships and assets that already exist within your business and sphere of influence. You already have what you need to become a master rainmaker; you just have to leverage your existing assets for the opportunities that await you.

Third, get some help. There are coaches, consultants, books, experts, all sorts of people out there who can help you get started. You're an expert at the law...not marketing. If you want to cut years off your learning curve, cut down on failures and save thousands of dollars, get the expert advice you need.

Fourth, the key ingredients of any marketing plan include: (i) strategic planning, (ii) tactical execution, and (iii) follow-up. Woody Allen may believe that half of life's success is just showing up, but real achievement comes from preparation and follow-up. Marketing cannot be performed as a shotgun approach like the occasional power lunch or attending a dreaded networking event. You wouldn't prepare for a deposition or trial without a plan; why implement a marketing plan without the same thought process. Every aspect of your plan must address your long and short-term goals, your strengths, niche, and what you want out of your business. Your strategy should be laser-focused and measurable.

Fifth, get someone to do the grunt work. Your secretary or a virtual assistant can help write letters, call clients, send out articles, press releases, and help you build a client database. There is no way you can do this alone or completely depend on the firm's marketing manager. It's up to you; but apply the 80/20 rule and spend the brunt of your time on the most important clients and matters.

Sixth, do a little client development every day. Call that old client who you haven't heard from. Send an article of interest to a new prospect. Set a little bit of time every day to do some marketing and you'll soon see a flower grow where once there was just a seed.

Seventh, the reason most marketing efforts fail is due to a lack of follow-up with action. And we all make this mistake. In many ways, this is what determines your success or failure, and too often, we don't realize it until it's too late. Your system should utilize a "ladder" or "drip" multi-contact approach which will show you've been there for them and you're the "go-to" person they need and want. The mantra here is to follow-up and stay in front of them consistently. And don't stop until you either die or they tell you to drop dead!

Eighth, have fun. Practicing law is difficult enough not to make the marketing fun. Choose marketing tactics that you enjoy and are easy, or you won't follow through. Be targeted and

optimistic that you're going to meet the people you need to advance your career and cause. And then with only a few simple disciplined actions every day, you will be led to the kind of success you want. Executed properly, marketing will become like a second skin as your leads, relationships, and opportunities begin to grow exponentially.

Who knows, you may even get rid of that rash.

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