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## Marketing -- A Process, Not a Personality

BY LAWRENCE M. KOHN

While the marketing of legal services has become an integral part of the profession, some lawyers hesitate to participate. One reason is the belief that marketing requires a certain "marketing personality" or "sales personality," which the lawyer does not have or want. For those individuals, it is important to learn that effective marketing is not the result of glad-handing, joke-telling salespeople. Rather, the marketing of professional services is a process of implementing marketing tasks. And, the personality a lawyer already has is the best vehicle for marketing his or her individualized service.

The process of marketing can be separated into four activities: 1. Defining the practice; 2. Targeting; 3. Communicating; and, 4. Staying in touch.

### *Defining the practice*

Lawyers need a clear understanding of what they do. One reason is to decide if it's what they really want. It is difficult to market any service that you don't enjoy performing. While this may sound obvious, I have met lots of lawyers who really don't enjoy their work. Naturally, these lawyers find any effort to get more work a burden and will inevitably procrastinate.

Another reason for defining your practice is to decide if you have absolute faith in your

ability to offer value. Without faith in your skills and faith in the fees you charge, marketing could be an effort to abuse your prospects. With faith in your ability to offer value, marketing is the positive experience of offering a good deal.

Finally, defining your practice helps you to identify a need in the market. A clear understanding of your service will allow you to match it to the market that needs it or change it accordingly.

### *Targeting*

With a clear understanding of your practice, you can identify the characteristics of your prospects. In marketing, there is one rule that will save you both time and money: The more you know about your prospects, the greater your ability to do business with them.

You can start targeting by analyzing your current client base. Take a look at the industries you serve, the annual revenues of your clients and the number of employees. Then, consider the personal characteristics of the decision-makers who will ultimately hire you. What are their hobbies, charitable interests, ages? What organizations do they belong to? What religions are they? When you know the facts about your targets, you can be more effective in meeting them and communicating your ability to offer value.

### *Communicating*

Communicating has three subsets: Contacting; Qualifying; and, Bonding. Contacting is the process of meeting your prospects. Since only a small percentage of the people you meet will become your clients, it will be necessary to meet a lot of people. One of the best ways is to meet people through the people you already know. For example, if you get business from accountants, it makes sense to meet the accountants of all your existing contacts.

Another way to meet people is through organizations. Your target analysis will reveal the appropriate organizations to visit and join. Once you've chosen an organization, you'll get the most out of it by getting involved.

As you meet people, you will want to qualify them. The technique is to ask questions

that reveal their business and personal characteristics. If you've done your targeting, it won't take long to decide whether or not the person you've met is a prospect.

A well qualified prospect deserves your continued attention. Now, your job is to bond with that individual. This is where the personality issue begins to create concerns. Understand that your goal is to communicate your ability to offer value-not to be entertaining. Some lawyers can actually be rude and unpleasant and still communicate an ability to offer value. One technique is to offer value in advance. You can educate your prospect to show your knowledge. You can inspire your prospect and position yourself as a leader. And, you can introduce your prospect to other people who may be of immediate service. The key to bonding is getting the prospect excited about the opportunity of interacting with you because of what you offer, not because you have a "marketing personality."

### *Staying in touch*

Even if you do a great job of bonding, not everyone will hire you on the spot. There are many obstacles, including existing competition, a lack of need, or just bad timing.

The solution is to develop systems to stay in touch with your qualified prospects over an extended period of time. Then, as the relationship evolves, a need for your services may arise and a prospect will convert to a client. Marketing systems include meals, parties, sports, seminars, speeches, articles, newsletters, etc. With consistent marketing systems in place, you will have a marketing machine that continues to communicate with your prospects and position you as the provider of choice on an on-going basis.

As competition continues; even shy or grumpy lawyers will need to acquire new clients. Fortunately the techniques to build a practice are available to all kinds of personalities. Clients want value. And, as they interact with prospective lawyers, they will see through social graces and look for lawyers who will fulfill their needs. If lawyers can communicate an ability to offer value, their prospects will learn that personalities are only the packages in which the value is wrapped.



Lawrence M. Kohn is president of Kohn Communications, a marketing and management consulting firm based in West Los Angeles, California that specializes in working with professionals throughout the United States. 310-652-1442