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Excerpts from:

Too Busy To Market?

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You're busy. You're working at capacity. You feel so much pressure to get the work out the door, the thought of spending time looking for new clients seems absurd. You're too busy to market.

While it feels good to be active in the practice of law, such a situation is a threat to one's safety in the business of law. Law as a business is subject to the same fundamentals of any business, and marketing is a constant.

Regardless of how busy you feel today, the harsh reality is that clients leave. They die, they merge, they convert to the competition without warning. Unfortunately, the sales cycle of meeting a new prospect, developing a relationship and closing the deal could take many years. So, no matter how busy you are, it's bad business to wait for time to market. As one managing partner of a large Los Angeles firm recently put it, "If you have time to market, it's already too late."

Following is one technique from the original article:

Learn contact management. Organized prospecting uses time effectively. The first step in contact management is targeting. Targeting is the process of identifying and creating a list of your most fertile prospective clients and referral sources by name.

THE POWER OF TARGETING

It is not enough to target industries or demographic categories. People do business with people - not categories. Therefore you must zero in on the names of the individuals you want to meet and close.

To find your targets, it's a good idea to look at the names in your Rolodex. Analyze current client lists. Go through old files, Study your alumni association roster. Review all the business cards you have hiding in your drawers and tucked under the sides of your desk pad. The problem

with this process is it is tedious, but you can think of it as panning for gold. The time you invest will uncover your most fertile and, therefore, most valuable opportunities.

The next step is to write down your goal for each target. Goal-setting is critical for success. You can't expect to get what you want if you don't know what it is. Who is ready for a proposal? Which clients could use additional services? Which referral sources could be referring more work. With clear goals, you'll spend your time on the most profitable activities.

Once your goal is clear, your next step is to write down your next action. Action items define what you plan to say and if you'll say it in a letter, in person or over the phone.

Writing your action plan will increase the likelihood of taking action. During a busy day, you won't have time to decide how to pursue a prospect. If your action plan is pre-conceived, you may only need a few minutes to implement it. Then, instead of grabbing an unnecessary cup of coffee, you'll grab the phone and pursue a prospect. It's smart to keep your target list by your phone. Seeing it all day long will stimulate your marketing awareness. As you are more aware, you will think of more targets worth pursuing.

A helpful hint for contact management is creating deadlines. Once you've decided your action plan, you can actually enter an appointment in your calendar to implement it. Documented deadlines facilitate follow-through - especially when you're busy.

Another important aspect of contact management is creating a database of important information about your targets. In addition to the basic addresses and phone numbers, you can record industry categories, names and birthdays of the spouse and children, referrals made and referrals received.

With a quality database, you can implement mailing campaigns that do not require much time but still effectively reach out to your targets. The database allows you

to customize the mailing which make your messages more meaningful and therefore, more effective. The database also helps you remember who received mailings in the past and who should receive them in the future.

There are a variety of ready-to-use database programs available at retail software stores. You can also create custom programs, however, it's probably a good

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idea to start with a simple program, as long as the data can be transferred to a more flexible program when you are ready to upgrade. Regardless of the software you choose, you'll save time if you let your mailings do the marketing.

Armed with an appreciation of the importance of marketing, increased organizational skills, and the ability to delegate, there's a good chance you'll be able to market - even when you are busy. However, some lawyers will never make time to make rain. Instead, they'll make excuses. They will rationalize, procrastinate, and lull themselves into a false sense of security. Usually, the longer they delay, the less inclined they will be to get on the front lines, meet new people and communicate the value they bring to the table. But; those who do market will be investing in future growth. And, there's a good chance that they will find the experience not only profitable, but also personally fulfilling and even fun. So, if you're wondering what is the secret to increasing your marketing our response is, "It's about time!"

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