

REPRINTED FROM LOS ANGELES DAILY JOURNAL

Monday, November 18, 1996

SABOTAGE AND IGNORANCE – WHY LAWYERS FAIL TO MARKET

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Even though Rainmaking has become an accepted principle in law firm management, I regularly run into lawyers who either sabotage the efforts of their partners or are completely unaware of what it takes to succeed.

The sabotage is motivated by a quest for power. Successful Rainmakers may undermine the efforts of their peers in order to maintain their position as King Of The Mountain. They promote the myth that Rainmaking is genetic – you're either born with the skills to bring in clients or you're not. This assault on the ability to learn Rainmaking skills fuels the insecurities of non-marketers and paralyzes any effort to change. And, it is a myth. Non-marketers can absolutely learn how to bring in new business.

Kings of the Mountain also intentionally create structures that stop future marketers by creating short-term demands which are unrealistic and guaranteed to fail. The sales cycle of meeting prospects, developing relationships and finalizing the deal can take years. Kings will also undercapitalize the efforts of novices. Marketing takes money and without a financial investment in outreach, success is unrealistic. Failed experiments by novices reinforce the stronghold of Kings.

Non-marketers who allow these Kings to promote Reign Making instead of Rainmaking will suffer greatly. Any lawyer who fails to develop their own book of business is destined to play a subordinate role for their entire careers. The older they get without developing marketing skills, the more difficult it is to change. Also, the longer they wait, they lose contact with the people who are most likely to blossom into business relationships.

Although some lawyers intentionally sabotage the marketing efforts of their partners, more often failure to market is due to a lack of marketing knowledge. Here are some tips to help those who don't know much about organized marketing but would like to improve.

Avoid the Copycat Syndrome

Well-intentioned partners with Rainmaking skills will try to instruct their peers by suggesting (or requiring) that they copy the techniques of the instructor. This copycat approach fails because people are different and will only feel comfortable marketing with their own styles. Marketing is difficult enough without asking strong-willed lawyers to exit their comfort zones.

Allocate time

Most non-marketing lawyers underestimate the time that is required to bring in clients. A shift to an effective marketing culture requires that lawyers change their daily schedules to include not only increased interaction with prospects and referral sources, but also increased interaction with partners to plan, and review marketing efforts.

Differentiate your firm

Non-marketers don't know how to describe their services. Think about what really makes you special. Remember, there's more to marketing than the promise of, "Good service, reasonable fees and quality work." These promises are so overused they no longer have meaning. How can your firm help your clients make more money? How can your firm make your clients' lives easier? Learn how to be specific when communicating the value you bring to your clients.

First measure success by tasks

Non-marketers regularly undermine the marketing effort by looking only for results. A major part of marketing is to monitor the tasks that lead to success. For example, identifying a new marketing niche is a task that must be implemented before new business comes from that niche. Writing articles, joining organizations, targeting prospects – these are important tasks that precede financial results.

Be patient and motivational

Non-marketers are impatient. Changes in marketing behavior don't happen overnight and consistent attention to the shift is a requirement. Don't expect lawyers to be able to create marketing plans without support and, don't expect implementation of the plan without consistent motivation. It's unreasonable to expect lawyers – even those with outstanding verbal and technical skills – to perform new tasks without motivation, education and supervision.

Be organized and persistent

Non-marketers are disorganized. Just as with any other serious business effort, marketing requires documentation. List every prospect and your strategy for pursuit. Maintain a chronological history of the effort. Give yourself deadlines for action items. Be sure to review the targets and strategies regularly. Stay focused and remember it may require dozens of interactions with the same target before they become a client. To keep on track, I recommend a mandatory monthly marketing meeting. If participation in marketing is not a requirement, it will be viewed as incidental and therefore, ignored.

Mobilize everyone in the firm

Non-marketers fail to appreciate the value that everyone in the firm brings to the effort. Secretaries are valuable resources for new ideas. They can be sounding boards, and a great source of motivation. They can help the lawyers maintain valuable data bases and remind lawyers to incorporate marketing in their daily routines. Receptionists must be trained to be cordial – even under the pressure of a busy board filled with hostile clients and annoying telemarketers. Paralegals can do marketing research. Everyone in the firm can be thinking of ways to offer better, friendlier service.

Silence the nay-sayers

Non-marketers allow hostile attitudes to derail enthusiasm. One negative, sarcastic attorney can destroy the delicate process of creating a marketing culture. There is absolutely no room for negativity. Ask these attorneys to immediately cease and desist anti-marketing behavior. Explain the severe impact of their attitudes and challenge them to find some positive outlet for their energy.

Implement firm-sponsored events

Non-marketers regularly rely on the individual efforts of the partners. Implement seminars, discussion groups or receptions. Events which require an invitation provide your partners a reason to call their contacts. Events bring prospects into your environment where they can meet all of the attorneys at one time. Bringing people into your office creates a marketing culture and motivates everyone in your

organization.

Have some fun

Non-marketers perceive marketing as a burden. Properly implemented, acquiring new clients is an exciting, challenging and pleasant experience. Blend marketing with your social life. Try to reach out to people who you like and respect. Identify potential clients and referral sources who could also be friends. Organize your partners into marketing teams. I like to think of teams as hunting parties – small groups who share common targets. Helping each other acquire clients is a fun and also bonding experience. The team spirit that marketing produces can keep firms together – even in troubled times.

For just about every law firm, marketing is a requirement for future success. It is imperative that every lawyer improve his or her marketing skills and actively participate in the effort to bring in new clients. In doing so, it is important to protect yourself from those who would undermine your success – intentionally through sabotage or unintentionally through ignorance.