

Easing the Pain of Making It Rain

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We've been assisting lawyers to become Rainmakers since 1988. During that time, we have come to the conclusion that there is one primary reason so many lawyers fail to succeed at Rainmaking - or for that matter, even give it a try. We call it the "Anti-Marketing Attitude." It starts somewhere in childhood. Somehow someone sent the message that any kind of selling was inappropriate behavior. And, the message was installed deep inside that young legal psyche. Over the years, the message was reinforced. Every pushy salesperson, every telemarketer, every obnoxious advertiser they heard convinced the anti-marketer that the decision to reject selling was valid.

When lawyers with an anti-marketing attitude face the need to bring in new clients, they intellectually acknowledge the responsibility, but deep inside they are repulsed by the thought and frozen in their pursuit. The emotional pain is so great that it is actually impossible to proceed. One seasoned Harvard Law School graduate, facing the need to market said, "If my father knew that I was trying to market my legal services, he would crawl out of his grave and spit on my face!" While this may sound extreme, it reflects a remarkably common sentiment. Selling for the anti-marketer brings up fear and guilt and shame. Any one of these sentiments is painful. Together, they are excruciating.

These non-marketers need more than a seminar to change their perspective. They need more than books or audio tapes or cajoling from their constituents. They even need more than compensation incentives (which can actually exacerbate the problem). They need a coach.

Coaching is the process of showing lawyers that selling can be appropriate and that they have the personality and the skills they need to make Rain. Coaches introduce practical, achievable steps - one at a time - in brief, monthly sessions. In some cases the sessions are as brief as 15 to 20 minutes. Coaching is usually implemented via telephone.

As each marketing step is accomplished, lawyers build their confidence and ultimately learn that the anti-marketing mentality is a false friend, and that marketing is not only appropriate but also enjoyable! Once the anti-marketing attitude is removed, almost any lawyer can dramatically increase their ability to bring in new clients.

As lawyers embrace marketing, the role of the coach is to continue to identify new opportunities for growth. A qualified coach will always be just ahead of the lawyer - helping to reach out to new markets and implement new strategies. While some lawyers use coaches for only a few sessions, many continue for years - looking at the coach as a sort of marketing alter ego who helps to maintain focus and persistence. After

all, even skilled marketers can get caught up in the frenzy of the practice and forget to continue to plant new marketing seeds.

The process of coaching is usually implemented by an off-site consultant. The practice of coaching by a partner or even an on-site marketing director has a variety of significant obstacles.

Probably the most significant is confidentiality. In the early stages, lawyers struggle with the awkward appearance of being unskilled at marketing. It feels embarrassing to reveal insecurities and weaknesses to anyone - especially if there will be other kinds of interactions during the work day. Also, there may be personal restrictions such as a spouse who is resistant to attending events or a home too modest for entertaining. These kinds of private issues can be overcome, but must be addressed in a safe environment.

Another problem with relying on internal resources is that coaching must be consistent. Interim failures and disappointments create an inclination to cut back or quit. Unless someone is compensated for the coaching, it is easy to let meetings slip and ultimately disappear. Prodding by on-site marketing directors is risky business for the marketing director who could seriously damage a relationship and negatively impact their position at the firm.

Finally, other lawyers in the firm probably do not have the skills required to coach. Even lawyers who are skilled marketers can fail to be effective coaches. There is a tendency to promote the techniques which have worked for themselves rather than focusing on the needs of the novice. Also, most marketers never suffered from the anti-marketing attitude and are completely unaware of the emotional pain which stops non-marketers. If any level of frustration is reached, the advice too often becomes, "Just do it!" While this advice may work for advertising campaigns, by no means will it motivate an uncomfortable lawyer.

As a result of coaching, hundreds of anti-marketing lawyers have overcome their distaste for marketing and have actually grown to enjoy the marketing process. They have come to learn that marketing is not only profitable, but also it is intellectually stimulating and emotionally fulfilling. As they focused on marketing, they became more aware of all the marketing opportunities which were available to them prior to their coaching experience but, due to their prejudices, failed to notice them. And, because they were persistent and continued to make an effort, they have learned new skills which will serve them for their entire careers.

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