

## **Developing a Marketing Culture in Your Firm**

by  
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Marketing opportunities surround us. The difficulty in marketing is not a lack of marketing opportunities, but rather, in recognizing them. The reason it is difficult for many lawyers to recognize marketing opportunities is that the culture in most law firms does not promote the key to marketing success - Marketing Awareness.

Although most firms claim to recognize the importance of marketing and to support it, the fact is that law firms often promote an **Anti-marketing culture** which actually discourages marketing efforts. Firms usually do not provide sales training for the non-marketers. Instead, lawyers frequently make sarcastic comments about their partners' attempts at marketing. And often, there are no financial incentives for bringing in new business. In fact, some lawyers complain that it is actually a disadvantage to try to bring in clients, because of the time commitment and lack of reward.

By contrast, firms with a proactive marketing culture support the efforts of lawyers to reach out and build new relationships. This attitude helps lawyers see the marketing opportunities around them and promotes the likelihood that lawyers will take action and ultimately develop new business.

In order to achieve a proactive marketing culture, it is not necessary to spend thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours developing a marketing plan. In fact, the process of creating a marketing plan can harm the marketing effort. That's because lawyers would rather plan than do the work of marketing. Once marketing plans are created, they are rarely reviewed or implemented.

A marketing culture, on the other hand, will enable lawyers to examine the many marketing opportunities that become obvious once the marketing awareness develops. Here are five techniques for building a marketing culture in *your* law firm.

### **1. Communicate about Cross-Selling**

Existing clients are the most obvious marketing opportunity. And yet, law firms regularly fail to take advantage of this resource. Lawyers overlook the additional needs of their own clients, and even refer out work which their partners could be handling.

In order to take advantage of cross-selling opportunities, you must first become aware of them. We recommend implementing ongoing internal seminars at which partners educate

each other on the services they provide and demonstrate their knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, partners should make it a priority to review their clients with each other on a regular basis. These discussions should be implemented both one-on-one, and in groups. Partners should create a detailed client list and discuss each client so that other members of the firm can identify the cross-selling opportunities.

## **2. Organize Team Marketing**

In many cases, lawyers are unaware that they are pursuing the same prospects as their partners. In these cases, they run the risk of independently pursuing the same prospect without their partners knowing. Or, they may be unable to think of a course of action for effectively pursuing a prospect.

Current technology, known as contact management, is capable of helping a firm document and share information about all prospective targets. As lawyers learn about shared targets, they can form a “*hunting party*,” and pursue the shared targets as a team.

## **3. Share Marketing Resources**

Lawyers often complain they are unable to think of techniques for meeting new prospects and referral sources. And yet, there are usually many marketing resources within each law firm. But, because of the anti-marketing culture, lawyers typically do not discuss their personal outreach activities with each other. As a result, lawyers remain unaware of the various outreach activities that exist.

For example, lawyers may be members of committees that are in charge of events and newsletters. These committees provide speaking, writing and networking opportunities. As lawyers discuss their outreach activities, it opens up the door for others in the firm to participate.

## **4. Acknowledge Marketing Effort and Success**

Obviously, lawyers will not feel motivated to take advantage of marketing opportunities unless there is a marketing culture that rewards their efforts and successes. Most firms do reward for results, but very few reward an energetic but yet unharvested outreach effort.

When associates and partners engage in marketing activities, they should be congratulated, personally and in public. If they bring in a client, they should be kept involved with the deal. And finally, there should be a clear financial reward for the development of new business.

## **5. Implement Monthly Marketing Meetings**

In an effort to maximize marketing awareness, and build a proactive marketing culture, one of the best methods is a department or firm-wide monthly marketing meeting. While a monthly marketing meeting can be an extremely effective tool, it can also be a disaster.

For non-marketers, a poorly run marketing meeting is demoralizing. Listening to boring stories about how some continue to succeed where others fail is annoying and further entrenches the non-marketers in their hostile, anti-marketing attitudes.

For skilled marketers, a poorly run meeting may be nothing more than "preaching to the converted." The time would be better used marketing or billing time.

Poorly run marketing meetings usually include a combination of preaching, pontificating and pointing fingers. Ultimately, they end up disbanded because they don't do the job, namely, stimulate the development of new clients.

If you'd like to make your marketing meetings more effective, consider the following tips:

1. Schedule a practical time. Plan for a time when the meeting is most likely to be well attended. While lunches are pleasant, they take up lunch opportunities with prospects and clients. Consider 5:30 PM. That's after Court and before dinner.
2. Require total attendance. No one is permitted to miss a meeting unless it is truly an emergency. An important meeting with a client or prospect is not an acceptable excuse - even though it sounds plausible. If you allow absenteeism, it will destroy the meeting.
3. Limit the topic. Don't schedule any other business agenda. When marketing is mixed with administration or case reviews, it will inevitably be deferred.
4. Start and finish exactly on time. Make it clear to everyone that they must be in their seats on time. This is remarkably important. Obtain a commitment from the senior lawyers and especially those you expect to disappoint you. If arriving late becomes a status symbol, the meetings will soon disband. Finishing on time makes the meeting fit into busy schedules.
5. Keep the meeting short. Try to keep it to a maximum of 1.5 hours. One hour or less is better. If people have limited time, they will quickly focus on what is important and eliminate the unnecessary details.
6. Divide the time equally. Don't let the successful marketers upstage the others. You may need a stopwatch. The marketers will want to reveal every nuance of their plans while the non-marketers will struggle to fill the time. This is an important opportunity to mentor and nurture the non-marketers.
7. Focus on the future. Expect each participant to report on their plans for the immediate future. They should talk about planned targets, planned articles, planned speeches, organizations to join and seminars to implement. Minimize discussions about the past. Focusing on the future stimulates both creative thinking and commitments to accomplish specific tasks.

8. Avoid bragging. Even though you want to support successes, this is not the forum. Successes recounted by the successful can demoralize the non-marketers. Success stories take time away from the important focus on the future. Often, they come across as bragging. Successes should be discussed at administration meetings. Use them as a way to begin discussions of how to handle the work.

9. Forbid negativism. The purpose of the meeting is to help each participant look into the future and execute marketing tasks. If someone doesn't approve of a strategy or target, they may mention their concern only if they have clear reasons. Even then, it should be presented constructively. And never mention someone's failure to implement a task which was discussed in a prior meeting. Embarrassing the attendees for failure to perform will eliminate future commitments. Negativism destroys motivation.

10. Promote mutual support. Everyone should help everyone. The monthly marketing meeting is an opportunity to hear other peoples' plans and offer support and suggestions. This is not limited to skilled marketers. Non-marketers develop their self-confidence as they help others think about targets and strategies.

Well executed, a monthly marketing meeting is motivational and a remarkably effective experience. People will leave with a sense of team spirit. They will feel supported and enthusiastic about their ability to implement their marketing tasks. They will look forward to the next meeting. They will learn about marketing, and as a result, they will be more likely to bring in new clients.

As firms learn how to develop proactive marketing cultures, awareness of marketing opportunities will flourish. And, as awareness flourishes, so will individual action. Instead of focusing exclusively on the billable hour and downplaying the necessity of marketing, lawyers will begin to see and pursue marketing opportunities in every telephone conversation, in every piece of correspondence. While practicing law, lawyers will begin to automatically ask the question, "What marketing opportunities exist here? They will feel more comfortable observing their partners, their competition and interestingly enough, professionals and business people in other industries who are using marketing techniques which may be successfully applied in their own practices.

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