

Administrators Can Manage Marketing

By

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One of the most significant contributions a law firm administrator can make is to help the firm acquire new clients. While administrators may not be Rainmakers, they **can** play a pivotal role in marketing administration. This is especially true in firms that have no marketing director. With the added support of an active administrator, lawyers can dramatically increase new business.

Law firms usually approach marketing in a disorganized and inconsistent way. Lawyers regularly fail to communicate their marketing strategies or activities. We often see the same targets being approached independently by several lawyers in a firm. They have difficulty cross-selling to existing clients. As a result, competitors get a foothold by offering services that could have been made available, but weren't. Lawyers often fail to stay in touch with important contacts they've met and miss long-term marketing opportunities. Of course, some lawyers fail to do any marketing at all. They don't see themselves as marketers and reject any behavior that looks like selling. Even skilled marketers often overlook opportunities due to busy schedules and the day-to-day distractions of practicing law. All of these weaknesses can be overcome with marketing administration.

Marketing administration means setting up and monitoring systems. This article will address four marketing topics: Contact data base; Cross-selling; Organization involvement; and, Web site content.

Contact Data Base Administration

The first and most important system that contributes to the marketing success of any firm is the contact data base. Most firms have a client data base, but clients are only a small portion of the total number of contacts the firm needs to document and manage. Administrators could be in charge of managing the firm's contact data base. The contact data base should contain the names of every responsible business acquaintance of every lawyer in the firm. That includes not only current clients but also current referral sources, prospective clients and prospective referral sources as well.

The benefits of a well-honed data base are dramatic. First, it creates an inventory of the most fertile marketing opportunities – existing relationships. It also creates an awareness of the marketing opportunities presented by new contacts. As lawyers get in the habit of adding quality names to the contact data base, they are forced to consider the marketing value of each name. This activity creates what we call the "Marketing Mind" and significantly enhances the likelihood of noticing marketing opportunities. As a result, we have seen non-marketers blossom into significant contributors to the marketing process.

Another benefit of an accurate contact data base is it helps to prioritize marketing opportunities. Too often, lawyers prioritize their outreach by communicating with only those targets who come to mind. Relying on memory alone results in selecting memorable people but not necessarily the most valuable people. Documenting the names of every contact helps lawyers prioritize their best opportunities. That will help them use their marketing time more effectively.

An accurate contact data base provides the ease of identifying shared contacts. Every contact data base software program gives you the ability to list the "owner" of a contact. Administrators should identify lawyers with shared contacts so they can coordinate their outreach and work as a team.

One more benefit of an accurate contact data base is that allows for an automated outreach campaign. Administrators could manage the process of sending newsletters to strengthen brand awareness and public image.

The benefits of a well-honed contact data base are significant, but the administration of it is difficult. It requires an effective system for adding, editing, tracking and deleting. It's a good idea to enlist the help of the secretarial staff to monitor the contacts of all the lawyers in the firm to determine eligibility for the contact data base. This requires extensive training and motivation. There should be regular communication between secretaries and lawyers regarding the maintenance of the contact data base to assure that it is accurate and up to date. Without diligent management, the contact data base will deteriorate and become worthless.

Cross-Selling Administration

In addition to contact data base management, law firm administrators can bring remarkable value to the firm's marketing effort by managing the process of cross-selling. Each lawyer has clients that may benefit from the services of other lawyers in the firm. However, lawyers have great difficulty implementing a cross-selling campaign without support. Law firm administrators could coordinate a program to analyze each client and determine cross-selling opportunities. The effort could begin with the firm's top ten most profitable clients. Or, each lawyer could be responsible for choosing a handful for review. Administrators could also coordinate internal seminars so lawyers could educate each other about their areas of expertise and how clients from other departments could benefit. The activity of cross selling management almost always produces short-term revenue.

Organization Involvement Administration

Another system that the law firm administrator can manage is involvement in organizations. For many law firms, organization involvement is one of the most important vehicles for meeting new contacts. The problem is that without management of the process, law firms regularly fail to receive full benefit. One reason is that lawyers fail to attend meetings. Law firm administrators could manage the process of identifying and communicating with alternate representatives in the firm to fill in for absenteeism.

Web Site Content Administration

One of the most exciting recent developments in marketing is the web site. The problem with web sites, however, is the need to fill them with valuable and current information. Without a centralized effort to manage it, the a web site will not accurately represent the firm's ability to offer value. The law firm administrator could manage the acquisition of content by communicating with each attorney. He or he could make sure that new articles are requested and posted, bios are updated, and out-dated information such as non-relevant articles or announcements are removed.

Marketing for law firms is a massive and complicated responsibility. Law firm administrators are in an excellent position to act as a centralized, organized control center that will help to keep the outreach consistent and effective.

Lawrence M. Kohn and Robert N. Kohn are principals in Kohn Communications, a marketing and management consulting firm. They have worked with hundreds of law firms across the country. They are pioneers in the consulting technique of one-on-one coaching and have implemented over 18,000 individual coaching sessions. They can be reached at 310.652.1442. Visit their website at www.kohncommunications.com.