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How Do You Know If Your Marketing Is Working?

By Sharon Berman

Every firm knows it should be marketing, but how do you know if your marketing strategies and tactics are really working?

Measuring the results of marketing is notoriously difficult. There are times when you can identify a direct correlation between cause and effect. For example, an attorney delivers a speech and a member of the audience becomes a new client. But all too often, the business of measuring marketing feels as squishy as putting your hand in a bowlful of gelatin.

Why should you even bother with measuring the results of your marketing? First and most obvious, you want to determine which marketing strategies and tactics are working, and which are not, so you know where to invest your marketing time and resources. In addition, measuring your marketing sends the message that it matters and that the firm recognizes its importance.

To evaluate the effectiveness, and therefore the value of your marketing, you need something to measure against. Is your marketing working if you generated 10 new quality leads, but your goal was 20 new leads for the same period? The answer is somewhere between “yes” and “no.” Determining what results you’re aiming for, along with your intermediate targets, is important in meaningfully answering this question.

Some areas of measurement are not terribly difficult. You send out a mailing or an email blast and receive an inquiry from a prospective client. Or, an existing client reminds you that there is a new problem brewing, which needs to be discussed.



But what if an attorney gives a talk and not a single member of the target audience makes contact afterwards? Does that mean that this aspect of your marketing hasn’t worked? Not necessarily. Someone who heard that lecture may become a client several months later, or refer a friend, or mention the topic and speaker to another attorney who then refers a client months or even years later.

How do you measure the less direct outcomes of marketing? Some say that the measurement metric is increased revenue; however, that is a fallacy because increased revenue from new business comes from a two-step process: first, generating leads, which is the purpose of your marketing; and then converting those leads into clients. Although your marketing may be working in terms of generating leads, if your attorneys do not have the marketing skills or training to convert prospects into clients, you won’t see increased revenue. If this is the case, you may want to consider a business development training initiative.

The first thing to measure, then, is the number of leads your marketing is gener-

ating so you know what’s working, and what needs to be tweaked. Since lead generation efforts take time to come to fruition and manifest themselves in new business, it’s vital to know as soon as possible which of your marketing tactics are generating how many leads. It’s also crucial to track your leads so you can nurture them over time and turn them into clients, or find out why they didn’t convert to client status.

A lead can be direct: “We’d like you to represent us in X,” or it can be a contact which is converted into an opportunity, such as: “That was an interesting article in your newsletter. Would you be interested in participating in a panel my trade group is putting on?”

Marketing is a pipeline. The second area of measurement is the results of your initiatives that flow to your ultimate objective: lead conversion. Let’s say your objective is to increase net revenue in a specific practice area. The strategy is to generate leads by positioning one or two of your attorneys as experts in the field. More specifically, the marketing tactics may be publishing articles authored by your attorneys, or giving talks, or being quoted by the media. You can measure how successful you’ve been in terms of implementing these tactics

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by the number of speeches given. You can also track the results in terms of follow-up contacts that come from attendees, even those who just say “good job,” as well as those that are inquiries about work. Tracking the results is not as straightforward as a cause and effect, but to a certain extent, they can be measured and correlated with new clients or more work from existing clients down the line.

The third important figure to measure is your conversion rate. For instance, how many referrals and leads do you need to generate to bring in one new client? It’s important to know that conversion rate because if you’ve set a revenue goal, or a goal for percentage of new business, you can then determine how many leads you

need to generate through your marketing. It’s great to have a goal for the end result, such as the number of new clients, but you need to know what it will take to get you there. How many “touches” – emails, seminars, podcasts – does it take to get the phone to ring with a new client or an existing client with a new opportunity.

Your ability to track and measure the results of your marketing depends on the size of your firm, your attorneys’ willingness to participate, and whether decision makers are champions of capturing the information. The actual measurement mechanism can range from a tic sheet – not the first choice, but better than nothing – to sophisticated software.

If anyone doubts the value of your efforts, explain that getting results depends on taking the right action, and taking the right action depends on having the right information. There is little point in agonizing over possible reasons why business is slow when those “reasons” are mere guesses, not based on facts. Tracking and measuring the results of marketing strategies and tactics provides facts for taking the right actions, and the right actions will produce the desired results.

Yes, tracking marketing results may be a squishy matter, but the mere effort of measuring them will encourage the constant tweaking of tactics and thus produce improvement over time.