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Marketing for the Rest of Us

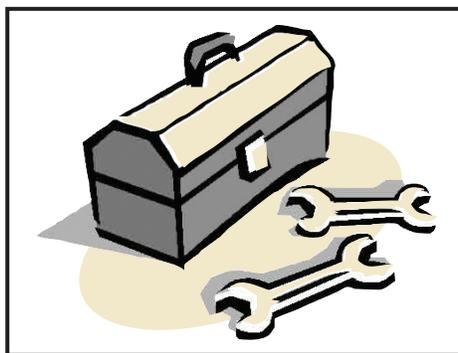
By Sharon Berman

I recently attended a panel at which several successful professionals from different disciplines discussed how they market their firms. Talking with a seasoned professional afterwards, I asked what she thought of the panel. She said that while she enjoyed the discussion, she had really wanted more hands-on advice. "Everyone on that panel is funny, charming, and talks easily, but most of us aren't like that," she said. "What about marketing for the rest of us?"

I found her comment quite thought-provoking. It relates to the myth that all those who shine in the area of business development are charismatic people and born knowing how to market. This is really not so. While it is true that successful business development most often requires some people skills, being the life of the party is not a prerequisite. Rather, client development comes down to a combination of elements, one of them being very straightforward and – to paraphrase the famous tagline – just doing it. Here then are some critical elements of marketing "for the rest of us."

First, work with who you are. Most attorneys are ahead of the game with strong verbal skills, but certainly not all are people magnets. I've seen more than a few successful rainmakers who might be categorized as "quiet." Yet, they are successful because their confidence comes through in terms of knowing they know their stuff and knowing who they are. Rather than forcing themselves to be something they are not, they work with who they are. You may also have noticed how, when the quieter person speaks up, the attention turns to them.

Listening may be one of the most effective business development "tools." Rainmakers



who attract people and prospects are those who really listen to the person across the desk from them. They let the speaker finish their thought and sentence, and then they ask questions before launching into a spiel about their credentials or firm. Listening carries a strong people attraction with it.

Further, those who are effective in client development have the right tools and make good use of them. One of the most important tools is your contact list or database including current, former and prospective clients, referral sources and influencers. Your database must be clean and up-to-date because this information forms the core of your marketing program. Are you making use of your database through email and direct mail? Are you distributing informative article reprints or client alert updates? Your database works as an effective lead generation mechanism whether you are loquacious or quiet.

Focus is another element of developing the leads which result in increased business. The more of a focus you develop, the easier it is to hone in on your target market, and the further you can make your marketing dollars go. Focus comes from segmenting

your markets based on market needs and opportunities. It means knowing who your market is (e.g., the company, who makes the buying decision, where they are located, and what criteria influence their decision), and creating a message that speaks to that. This connects back to knowing yourself and working with who you are. If your personality is not aligned with your market, your focus will be less effective. For example, working with entertainment figures may require different personality traits than working with manufacturers and distributors.

Consistency is another hallmark of effective "marketing for the rest of us." All the elements of your marketing – from your messages to your "look" to your communication with your markets – must be consistent. Consistency in your marketing is part of the engine that can put you far ahead in the rainmaking game.

Remember that almost anyone who really has the desire can be a rainmaker, whether they are a wallflower or have the personality of Tony Robbins. In fact, most of us are not born with business development spoons in our mouth. However, the desire to learn and improve, combined with time-tested marketing elements, can get the phone to ring with the kind of clients you want.



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