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What You Can Do With Marketing

By Sharon Berman

Law firm marketing has come a long way. Many firms are making it a priority, or at least know it is something they need to think about. But even attorneys and administrators who know their firms should focus on marketing, are sometimes not clear what marketing can do or should do for the firm. There is still a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding about what marketing really is.

We often think of marketing in terms of tactics (e.g., let's get the website done) or in broad, general terms (e.g., let's get our name out there). However, there is a lot more you can do with marketing much of which is often overlooked.

The bottom line of marketing a professional service is to generate opportunities to be in front of prospective clients. Once you are in front of them, you can begin the selling process, which is separate from marketing. There are many things marketing can do to generate those opportunities.

For starters, marketing can help you create or transform the image and perception of your firm. Whether you don't like your current perception in the marketplace or just want to change it, marketing is the way to approach it. Of course there has to be substance behind the perception, but the market's perception can be larger than the substance. Just look at what the right website can do for you in terms of expanding perceptions. For example, it can give a local firm the image of a



bigger one, not to mention provide access to a broader audience. Notice we're talking about perception, not deception. You have to be able to deliver on the perception your marketing generates.

The flip side is when you have the substance, but haven't created the perception to go with it. Many firms tell me that they are "hidden gems"—with big-firm expertise without big-firm prices. No doubt they have the substance, but marketing can help polish that gem so that it glows.

Marketing can also help you validate your client's decision to retain your services. When they see that an attorney from your firm is scheduled to speak at an industry event, or when they receive an article reprint or see one of your attorneys quoted in the newspaper, it confirms that they are choosing someone who has credibility.

Marketing can help you educate your

markets about your services, communicating what they need to know about choosing an attorney in your field. Educating your markets about all of the services you provide is critical because even existing clients may not know about everything you can provide. For example, if they used your firm for estate planning services, it takes repeated communication to acquaint them with your expertise in other areas.

With marketing, you can "prime" your market so that when the time is right and they're ready to "buy," they think of you first. Every day your attorneys meet referral sources and prospects who are not yet ready to make a "purchase" decision. You can use marketing to stay in front of them, keeping the pump primed, so to speak.

Further, marketing can help you increase the number of referrals you receive and maintain your current referral sources. With tactics such as direct mail, email or newsletters, you can stay in front of them and keep reminding them of who you are and what you can do. Of all the law firms they may know, yours will come to mind first because they have just heard from you.

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What You Can Do *(continued)*

Marketing can help differentiate your firm from the competition. There are a lot of firms competing for the same business. What is different about yours? Marketing helps you craft and deliver your distinctive message to your audience.

Marketing also promotes a “comfortability” factor by creating awareness of your firm and its attorneys. So when someone says you should call the Smith law firm, the response is, “Yes, I’ve heard of them,” not, “I’ve never heard of them.”

An often overlooked role of marketing is in attracting top talent. Lawyers, especially younger ones, are usually more attracted to firms whose names they have heard and which are known in their marketplace. In fact, one of the triggers for calling us in is often that a firm is having trouble recruiting because no one has heard of it.

This is also true when it comes to attracting the human capital that keeps the motor running such as you, the administrator, along with paralegals, IT profes-

sionals, etc. Internal marketing can help you retain that top talent, too, but that’s another article.

So when you think about what marketing can do for your firm, think beyond the tactics. Think about marketing from a strategic vantage point and get the complete picture of everything you can achieve with effective marketing.

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