



MARKETING  
**SPOTLIGHT**

Published: **The Leadership Exchange**

Date: August, 2005

## ***BRINGING YOUR FIRMS MARKETING STRATEGY BACK TO HEALTH***

When was the last time your firm's marketing plan had a checkup — a comprehensive evaluation to determine if your firm's business development strategies were paying off? A healthy dose of marketing is what makes your top and bottom lines happen; if your plan has "expired," maybe it is time to examine if the attorneys in your firm are efficiently selling their expertise to attract new clients.

Everyone at your firm has the capability of making marketing miracles happen, from the youngest associate to the senior partner with decades of experience. In fact, education and experience pale in comparison to general business development know-how. That's where your job as an astute law firm administrator can help put your firm in the healthiest marketing position.

A powerful prescription for marketing success begins with a little self-examination. What are your firm's core competencies, or in other words, what is it that your firm does better than anyone else?

**Successful business developers know their own strengths and are able to develop marketing programs that highlight these strengths.**

*'...everyone has the ability to be a rainmaker'*

Perhaps your firm specializes in medical malpractice defense. Have you worked with your attorneys to build relationships with professionals who could be referral sources? Have you positioned your attorneys as experts in the field among the local business media?

Once you've identified your firm's niche, **it's time to standardize your branding and image.** Educate your firm's attorneys about the key message you want them to convey to the community — your firm's area of expertise, for example. Ensure that your attorneys are on the same page when it comes to the marketing goals you are trying to achieve. Have the goals been communicated not just to the attorneys but to everyone in the firm. Is this being done on an on-going basis?

**Your next step is to establish realistic goals.** It is a good idea to delineate a specific timeframe when setting marketing goals, such as booking two speaking engagements in the next three months. Can you point your attorneys to target organizations? Whatever your goals, it is important to make them realistically challenging and achievable, allowing you and your colleagues to stretch a bit, to keep motivated and to enjoy the process.

Bringing in new business doesn't have to be painful, just a matter of **strategic networking.** Perhaps the best resources for new business are already on your Rolodex or BlackBerry. Your first calls when it comes to marketing should come from your firm's existing client base. Consider your most important client relationships and ask yourself if your clients are aware of your

range of capabilities. Does one partner need to introduce another to the same client. Make sure your existing clients are aware of the full-range of capabilities at your firm for cross-selling purposes.

As we all know, one of the best ways to impress a potential employer is good follow-up after an interview, whether it is by phone or email. The same holds true for potential clients who have been impressed by your firm's expertise through an initial business development program. **Follow-up is the key to making sure your valuable efforts and your firm's name stays on the table.** As an administrator, can you close the loop with them, for example, ask them if they can make the follow-up call by Friday, and check back with them. Accountability is very powerful.

**Take advantage of the variety of tools available in the marketplace.** Selling your firm can be as straightforward as an ad in the local business newspaper or as subtle as sponsoring a charitable event. For law firms, "giving" away their knowledge is one of the most effective ways to attract new business, e.g., sharing knowledge through articles, speaking, information on your website, etc.

Finally, once you're well on your way to marketing success, **be sure to establish a regular system of ongoing evaluation.** One obvious way of determining the health of your marketing campaign is to quantify dollars and cases, such as the number of new clients. Don't forget to create a system for identifying where new business is coming from; this is one of the easiest tactics to determine which of your strategies is most successful.

The key to developing new business is to recognize that everyone has the ability to be a rainmaker; it's just a question of knowing the right moves. The dynamics of the legal marketplace have dramatically changed in the past several years. Not only are more attorneys practicing law, most firms are hiring their own in-house marketing specialists or outside consultants in order to remain competitive. As an administrator, you have the opportunity to create marketing miracles when it comes to the health of your firm's business development goals. ■



*Sharon Berman is principal of Berbay Corp., a marketing consultancy that specializes in working with law firms. She can be reached at [berman@berbay.com](mailto:berman@berbay.com).*