



# MARKETING SPOTLIGHT

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## **Doing Things Differently ... For Different Results**

**By Sharon Berman**

I have yet to meet a lawyer or hear of a firm whose goal it is to do less business or remain flat in the coming year. We all plan to improve, to generate more income or a more profitable business.

But when I dig deeper and ask a professional what they actually plan to do differently next year in order to increase or improve their results, I usually just get a puzzled look or, at best, a vague answer, such as “I intend to do more networking.” However, the fact is that to get a different result, you have to do things differently. In the words of W. Edwards Deming, “If we continue to do what we’ve always done, we’ll continue to get what we’ve always got.” Making a change doesn’t necessarily mean working harder, but it does mean working smarter. Here are a few simple actions you can take to support your colleagues in achieving their goals for next year.

You’ve heard it before and there’s a reason. It’s important to be specific in what you want to achieve, and then detail the steps that will get you there. Writing it down makes it real and shows whether your plan is realistic. When you see in black and white what you need to do in order to generate the 10 leads that will give you one new piece of business, your efforts become much more focused than vaguely aiming at bringing in “more business.” You can also ask yourself about your willingness to do what it takes. If “balance” is a high priority, being out at firm-related dinners every night may not be on your agenda.

The first step to reaching higher is knowing where you stand or where you came from; in other words, you need to know

what your statistics are. Most people only look at their target goal, but don’t plan how they are going to get there, and haven’t tracked their pipeline. Generally, most attorneys do not have a concrete idea of where their business comes from. While I’m sure that many of you know, for example, what percentage of this year’s business derived from referrals, a surprising number of firms do not. They can take their best guess, but haven’t tracked it.

Do your attorneys know how well they did this year, not in terms of billable hours or fees originated, but in terms of what they had to do to get new business or expand work from existing clients. Do they know their conversion rate, i.e., how many leads they had to generate in order to land the right kind of client? The conversion rate is an important, yet often overlooked figure.

Some lawyers claim that given the opportunity to be in front of someone, they will succeed in landing the client. But what they fail to acknowledge is how many prospects they may have had to winnow out before they got in front of the right one. With how many people did they communicate who turned out not to be right, perhaps because they were from companies that were too small, or because they were unwilling to pay the firm’s fees? How many are still in the pipeline, yet to sign up.

Why is this important? If you know that you have to talk with seven prospects in order to land a client who engages you at the right rate, that becomes a key figure in your plan. You can then take the necessary steps to generate those numbers. If one of your attorneys hasn’t tracked their conversion rate in the past, encourage them to do so going forward.

The next question is, where did the business come from? It seems like such a basic question, yet again, it is a factor that is rarely tracked on an individual basis. For example, if a large portion of their work came from referrals, then who are the largest referral sources, and what are the attorneys doing to maintain those profitable relationships? Firms say that it’s not a concern because a referral source sends all its work to them, but while they are saying that, someone else is sitting across the desk from that referral source, trying to get that business.

Looking at your stats can also tell you if your involvement in organizations is paying off, or how you are going to change your actions to make it pay off. Once you’ve decided an organization is worthwhile, and that you are targeting to obtain one or two clients, your networking is different. This doesn’t mean you become a pushy salesperson, but it can mean that you’re asking questions to obtain information about others to see what kind of reciprocal relationship there may be. Your endeavor becomes much more strategic than haphazardly attending meetings in the hopes of connecting with the right person.

Supporting your lawyers in growing their practice by 25% is ambitious, but may be doable, however really making it happen, requires a concrete plan and the follow-through to execute on it. ■



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