



MARKETING SPOTLIGHT

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Taking a Stand: Letting Your Markets Know Who You Are

By Sharon Berman

Your attorneys' skills in labor law, litigation, business transactions may be as good as, or better, than anyone's out there. But how do you help differentiate them from the pack? How do you get prospective clients and referral sources to remember that your firm handles bankruptcies or personal injuries when you are just one of many out there? Or, if you provide services across a range of industries, how can you distinguish your firm to make your marketing stand out?

Narrow Your Focus – Broaden Your Prospect Base

To maximize your marketing return, you need to narrow your focus and let the world know who you are. Does your firm focus on business transactions for automobile dealerships? A specific practice area focuses people's attention, which helps them remember you.

However, it can take courage for an attorney to step forward and clearly state their specialty. It's only natural to fear that you will lose work ("If they think I only work in the auto industry, they won't call me for anything else"). But, if you don't give people a reason to remember you, it decreases the likelihood that they will keep you in mind. On the other hand, if your attorney is memorable, prospects will approach even when their need does not match the stated specialty. Prospective clients and referral sources say: "I know you specialize in working with electronics companies, but my client, an auto parts manufacturer, needs legal counsel. Can you help?"

Staking a claim in a market does not preclude taking other business. It just means that you are strategic about where your firm invests its marketing dollars. It's the difference between proactively marketing to a

specific type of client versus accepting whatever business comes in the door.

Choosing a Specialty

Some attorneys choose their industry specialization while others stumble into. If the firm has just worked with its third client in the printing industry, you may have your specialty. Or, specialization may begin with a conscious decision, either because an attorney particularly enjoyed working with a client in a specific industry, or because you've identified a high-potential market.

You can also choose your degree of specialization. Some firms are extremely specialized; for example, they only handle municipal work or work with telecom companies, and they refer out any other work. Other attorneys who have selected a preferred industry will do the same type of work for a company in another area when the opportunity arises.

An alternative to focusing on an industry is by having a sub-specialization, such as a personal injury attorney who specializes in cases involving children.

Before your firm defines its territory, there are a few caveats to consider. First, just how special is specialized? Some attorneys say that they work with entrepreneurial or emerging companies, but that is vague. It needs to be narrowed down. However, you can be too narrow by zeroing in on a low potential market, where, for example, clients will only pay rock-bottom fees.

Market Your Specialty

Once you have a specialty, here are the three simple steps for marketing it:

- Create a section of your website, if not a separate website, devoted specifically to your target market. Ideally, include some case studies,

testimonials, and a client list. Also, prepare a targeted hard-copy marketing piece such as a brochure or one-sheet.

- Customize your message to your audience. When an attorney is communicating with a prospect in your target market, let them know that you specialize in their niche. In a different situation – an employment lawyer is discussing healthcare with the owner of a security alarm company – tailor your message. The message might be that your firm handles employment law across a range of industries.
- When asked to introduce yourself, include your specialty. For example, an estate planning attorney might say that they work with high net-worth individuals, with a focus on working with physicians.

Stand Out from the Bunch

Educating markets about what your attorneys do is an on-going process. By clearly delineating who you are, you make yourself memorable – not "just another employment lawyer." The bottom line is that by staking a claim to a specialty, you can attract more, not less business. Even people who don't need your particular expertise will be more likely to remember you and will approach you for other opportunities.



Sharon Berman is principal of Berbay Corp., a marketing consulting firm that specializes in working with law firms. She can be reached at berman@berbay.com.