

The WCBA's Lawyer Referral Service Is a Great Resource for Every Lawyer

By Jeffrey S. Peske, Esq.

AFTER PRACTICING LAW for several years at a law firm, a senior partner imparted some very good advice. She said, “[t]here are many lawyers like you who are great at what they do, but what often sets the successful attorneys apart is that they are able to bring in business.” She was right.

Unfortunately, at the time of our conversation, I had not yet heard of the Westchester County Bar Association's Lawyer Referral Service (LRS). My firm's clients enjoyed working with me, but they were still the firm's clients. I needed to bring in my own business. I was not politically connected, nor a member of any organization outside of the local and state bar associations. How was I going to bring in business?

I was being peppered with emails from online attorney referral services. Unfortunately, they all wanted significant money upfront as well as long term contractual commitments.

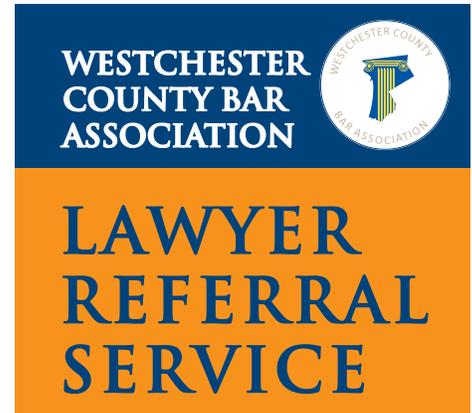
I thought of giving lectures on legal topics in which I was developing an expertise. These lectures are typically suited for more established attorneys. I only had about five years of experience at the time, too new to be considered a leading expert in any given area. I gave up on this idea as well.

I eventually brought some work to the firm, but it wasn't enough. About five years ago I came across the LRS through the Westchester County Bar Association website. I had heard of the LRS once or twice before but never looked into it. It was a missed opportunity.

For the last five years the LRS has been a great resource for building my client base. Not only have I received a steady stream of clients from the LRS but these clients often state that they would retain me for any further legal representation and would not hesitate to recommend me to anyone looking for a lawyer. This word of mouth is better than any advertising.

The cost is only \$125 per year and 15 percent of fees earned per client above \$500. The \$125 is a tiny fraction of what the online referral services were demanding upfront. Further, you only have to pay the LRS when you are paid by the client or through the case proceeds.

Notably, you can choose the type of work referred to you. There are dozens of categories from which to select. My experience is in professional liability defense work, premises liability, personal injury, work site accidents and commercial litigation. However, if matrimonial law is your thing, check the box. If you work in bankruptcy and/or



criminal law you can check one or both boxes. The categories are numerous and the cases are screened for whichever specialties you choose.

The LRS does not obligate you to take any case that is referred. If you do not take the case for any reason, simply refer the potential client back to the LRS and send the LRS the appropriate comments via the previously provided fax form.

The LRS is a great resource for every lawyer. Whether you are a young solo practitioner hanging a shingle for the first time or, like me, an experienced lawyer in a prestigious mid size firm, the LRS can be right for you.

If you would like to speak further about my LRS experiences you can reach me at jeffreypeske@vlmmc-law.com.

Jeffrey S. Peske, Esq., is a WCBA member and a partner with Voute Lohrfink Magro & McAndrew, LLP. He serves Westchester, Rockland, Putnam and Dutchess Counties as well as the five boroughs of NYC in the areas of professional liability defense work, premises liability, personal injury, work site accidents and commercial litigation.