

CLIENT DEVELOPMENT 101

When you are going to law school, learning about the mechanics of our legal system and, if you are lucky, the practical skills of advocacy, no one tells you that in addition to everything else, you have to be a professional marketer. However, client development is an important part of any practice and this involves marketing yourself. In a previous article, Anita Lerek of our office discussed the importance of client development to the growth of an associate. Herein, we will set out some basic tips to help the associate accomplish just that!

(1) Good Marketing requires Good Planning

For a lucky few, marketing & self-promotion comes easily. However for the vast majority of us, it requires time and effort, and like any task, benefits from careful and considered planning.

Planning involves the creation of a personal marketing strategy which takes into consideration your strengths and weaknesses and how best to market based on them. There are a number of Individual Marketing Planning Forms on the internet, which can be of assistance to you, or your firm may have its own. These forms help a lawyer to plot out their goals and plans for marketing on an annual basis.

Remember, that any marketing plan is only as good as you make it – the best plan in the world won't help you if you don't implement it. You should expect to put in approximately 100-200 hours per year to business development and any plan you prepare should outline who you are going to market to, how you are going to market to them, and what your goals are.

Planning also goes to having a rough script ready for networking events or telephone calls. Knowing what you are going to say will help you to keep your cool, even if you have a bad case of the nerves.

(2) NETWORKING

The word "networking" raises the spectre of cocktail parties with everyone handing out their business cards to each other. These networking events are useful but merely scratch the surface of this topic. Networking is merely the method by which a person grows their "web" of acquaintances, hopefully to their benefit. The full scope of networking will be the subject of a future article on its own. However for the time-being, a few comments can be made:

- Joining an Organization is a great way to Network. Be it the Bar Association or a community organization, the more people who know you the better. Networking is a 24/7 process and you never know when the person you are speaking to at your Community Theatre might call you to help him out with his company's business.
- Keep in Touch!!!! Create a mailing list and continually update it. You might think your niece or nephew's coach won't be interested in your firm's recent article on tax rollovers....but he might.
- Friendly interest goes a long way. Listen to what people have to say. Not only is talking about themselves, a popular activity for many people, but you will learn more about them so that you can know how to help them.
- Ask Questions – the more information you have, the better. Remember, the secret is not to sell them on you but to have the knowledge to be able to help them when they need it.

(3) MARKETING IS AN ART, NOT A SCIENCE

So you've put in all the time and effort and the phone hasn't been ringing off the hook. Remember, turning an acquaintance into a client can take months or even years (if ever). If you have done it right, people in your web will view you as a resource that they can call upon when they need help. However, that still doesn't mean that they can or will use your services. Maybe their brother-in-law is their lawyer, or maybe they just don't need your services. The point is to create a client base and the more people you know and the more activities you are involved in, the more likely you will create a client base. The more people you meet, the better chance you'll have of obtaining clients.

FINAL WORDS – GOOD LUCK AND GOOD MARKETING

RELATED RESOURCES

Websites:

LawMarketing.com www.lawmarketing.com

Is a very useful resource on the topic, with articles by experts in marketing the legal profession. The website's resource section also includes a Planning Form and an Associate Marketing Checklist, both of which might be helpful to you.

Vault.com www.thevault.com

This more general site is not focused solely on the legal profession. It has some interesting articles on marketing and networking.

Books:

Carlson, Richard K., Personal Selling Strategies for Consultants and Professionals. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1993.

Crane, F.G., Professional Services Marketing. New York: The Haworth Press, 1993.

Misner, Ivan R. and Robert Davis,, Business by Referral. Austin: Bard Press, 1998.

Payne, Adrian, et al., Relationship Marketing for Competitive Advantage. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998.

Wannop, Donna C., Marketing Legal Services. Carswell: Toronto, 1989.

Waugh, Troy, 101 Marketing Strategies For Accounting, Law, Consulting, And Professional Services Firms: A Blueprint for Selling Essential Services. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2004.