

# Marketing a Law Firm

By Melissa Werkenthin

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Marketing a new law firm is a challenging and many times an overwhelming task. Due to the start-up cost associated with opening an office, many attorneys are unable to hire a consultant to help with developing a marketing strategy. However, this doesn't mean a sole practitioner or small-firm lawyers cannot implement some cost effective strategies to enhance their business.

Getting the word out about a practice requires a mix of creativity and an allocated advertising budget. Though the marketing mix will vary for different types of practices and specialties (i.e. personal injury, family law, corporate law, etc.), here are a few options to market your new firm:

## A. Traditional Advertising Media

1. Yellow Pages - For most attorneys, advertising in the Yellow Pages has become the status quo. Open any yellow page book nationwide and turn to the attorney section. You will easily see twenty or more full-page ads. Do this work? For some attorney it does. For firms that specialize in criminal (DWI, bail, etc.) and some family or divorce attorneys, a yellow page ad works. For other specialties I recommend having a presence (you need to be at least listed) and if your budget allows, have a business card size ad.

2. Radio - Chose a station because it targets your specific audience. If you are going after an older client, don't advise on a Top-40 station. Try looking at a demographic of Adults 35+. Also, place your advertising in time periods that you can get a lot frequency at a lower cost and where you can reach a large number. It is more effective to reach 10,000 5x than to reach 50,000 1x. Rates vary by station and time, but the most important aspect of radio is frequency.

3. Television - As with radio, only choose television if it is going to get you in front of your target audience. Television is generally perceived, however, daytime and other off-peak times can be very affordable depending on your market. In general, for personal injury or worker's comp clients, I recommend running heavy in daytime (during business hours) in programs that attract our specific demographics. Rates can be negotiated at a lower rate with longer commitments.

For television to be the most effective, resources need to be spent in developing two or three :30 commercials that can rotate throughout the year. Many TV stations will offer "free" production, however, it is always best to work with a professional production house in order to get the best quality. In general a :30 commercial will cost approx. \$3000.

4. Print Ads - Print advertising is the popular form of advertising for family law or corporate

attorneys. However, in general the results can be mixed depending on the type of publication. Newspapers tend to be too broad and many times magazines are too narrowly focused. I would recommend using print advertising if you are going after a very narrowly targeted client. Otherwise, your resources are better spent in other areas. If you do choose to use print advertising, find a graphics designer to develop the ad even if the ad will only be text. A professional graphics designer will keep the ad looking sharp and professional.

5. Direct Mail - Direct mail can be expensive, but sole practitioners or lawyers in small firms shouldn't view it as cost-prohibitive. Direct mail is best used to develop a client database as opposed to a prospecting tool. Use direct mail to keep in touch with past clients in the hope of them using you again or passing along your information as a referral. Newsletters or "client-alerts" (otherwise known as Informational Mailings) are also forms direct mail.

## B. Electronic Advertising Media

The Internet - The Internet is another tool that offers mixed results for legal advertising. Before investing in a website determine if your target clientele base is "web-savvy" or "wired." If not, your resources will be better spent in other areas. I again have found that attorneys that target small businesses, professionals, or specialize in family or real estate law tend to have better results with developing a website over personal injury and other similar law specialties.

## C. Public Relations and "Free" Advertising

1. Press Coverage - Press releases can be a vital part of building the credibility of any firm. Though press coverage is looked upon as "free" advertising, don't be fooled. When seeking out press coverage for a case, etc. always look for a way to offer a story or angle to the publication. This will increase the possibility of getting the article written and will make you friends in the press who know you understand their needs.

There are certain types of practice areas (such as personal-injury law and criminal defense) that involve cases that the local press might be interested in. Writing a simple press release is very easy to learn.

2. Bylining Articles - Setting yourself up as an "expert" on a specific subject or field will enable you to build your credibility. Additionally, if you can develop a relationship with a local newspaper, etc. that will allow you to submit articles with contact information you not only will build credibility but also be able to get client leads.

3. Speaking Engagements - Speaking engagements at seminars is particularly helpful in gaining referrals from lawyers and other professionals, and it helps to build your credibility. Many organizations look for professional who can explain their industry to lay people who in turn become a valuable referral base.

4. Civic Involvement - Community and public involvement can help you personally as well as professionally. Donating professional time for a local fundraiser or non-profit organization can turn into a huge referral base, can build your credibility in the public, and offer opportunities to get media coverage.

5. Networking - Networking or leads group can be a great resource for small firms just starting out. No matter your specialty, by developing professional relationships with business owners and other professionals you will start to build a referral network. These groups generally meet about once a week for lunch or breakfast. The challenge of networking groups is that it takes time to see a large return on investment, however, in the long run you will build relationship that will help you not only

grow your client base, but gain valuable business advise.

Marketing a successful law takes dedication and a comprehensive marketing strategy that works within the goals of the practice and not against them.

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Melissa Werkenthin is the President and Founder of Loki Media, an advertising and marketing consulting agency specializing in marketing for professional services and political advertisers. If you would like more information about marketing your business or have a question, please visit <http://www.lokimedia.com> or send an email <mailto:melissa@lokimedia.com>.

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