



By Seth Horowitz

Promoting the Law Firm: What Works

LAWYERS MUST MARKET THEMSELVES AND their firms in today's uber-competitive legal landscape.

It is not enough to be a "great" lawyer at a "great" law firm as being "great" is no longer a differentiator, although being average or bad is.

A great "Product" in the Four Ps of Marketing—Product, Price, Promotion, Place—will definitely assist with retaining clientele. Your firm's management makes internal, strategic decisions on Price and Place, or locations.

This article is about the wild card, Promotion.

When devising an overall marketing strategy, a firm can dissect where it is (Point A) and how it plans on moving to Point B. Many law firm leaders are not good at sitting down to take hard, honest looks at where they are and what they need to do to arrive at where they want to be. A strategic marketing plan, often driven by outside, objective eyes, will allow the

firm to undertake a comprehensive study of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (and Trends)—a SWOT analysis. The results will help drive the firm's brand positioning and trickle down to the rainmakers, who ultimately bring in the revenue.

Once a firm decides on its differentiators, and what sets it apart, the firm's marketing minds can create an umbrella strategy that drips down to the various marketing tactics used by practice groups and individual attorneys.

Tried and true tactics include networking, branding, public relations, advertising and the web, social media and SEO.

Business Development/Networking

It is often said that "clients hire lawyers not law firms," therefore it is incumbent upon the firm's rainmaking lawyers to disseminate a firm's strategic differentiators to the "real world."

Once a firm adopts an identity, which like any organism can change with the times, the easiest way for that identity



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to be communicated to others is through one-on-one messaging.

Lawyers go to events, lunches and conferences to meet prospective clients and wave the firm flag. Understanding what prospective clients need will drive the messages the lawyer sends. It isn't incredibly effective to try to sell real estate legal services to someone looking for labor and employment legal services. If your firm handles both, then becoming a master of cross selling can augment your book of business.

This is where the art of promotion comes in (the science is going to the right places to meet the right people). Creativity and listening skills will serve lawyers well as opportunities present themselves. When there is potential for client retention, conveying competence and trust will help land the engagement and the delivery on the promise of the firm's differentiators will assist with retention.

If a firm bills itself as "the most responsive M&A boutique in Sherman Oaks," then it must deliver on that brand promise after the work comes in.

Lawyers are constantly complaining about not having enough time to develop business. That is often merely an excuse, because business can be developed anywhere. It is what you say, not where you say it, that leads to a strong book.

Branding/Advertising

Using the example of "the most responsive M&A boutique in Sherman Oaks," a firm can develop a tagline and other advertisements around brand promises. There are plenty of law firms in Sherman Oaks that say they do M&A work, however adopting a tagline and backing it up is a good way to overtly differentiate. High, strong design will also demonstrate that the firm is credible and allocates resources to its brand.

Setting aside egos for the benefit of the brand by shortening the firm's name from "Smith, Johnson, Jones, Michaelson, Howard, Smith and Parker" to "Smith Johnson" will help with branding efforts. It will also help with creating a bold, easy to digest logo. Committing to the logo and consistently applying it is much more important than reaching full design consensus within the firm, which is nearly impossible.

Note: Lawyers like to meddle in tactical marketing. Bad idea. Lawyers need to focus on leveraging the marketing resources around them to bring in work. When it comes to design (and content creation, public relations, etc.) they need to trust the professionals they hire to execute. The law firms that market best do it this way.

Public Relations

Having the right media relationships to procure sourcing

opportunities is the quickest way to achieve credibility. Every firm needs a few "talking heads" to light up the internet and print publications with quotes in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*, and *Bloomberg*.

Using our previous example, M&A and other corporate deals happen all the time, and reporters often need expert sources to weigh in on what happened, what might happen, and other legal nuances. Lawyers being quoted offers valuable exposure for your firm, however, playing the "PR game" does not come without risk. Reporters will spell your name incorrectly, they will misquote you, they will take your comments out of context, and they will use your words to paint a story that creates sides.

Building a PR network can be a time-consuming and challenging process. It can be a daunting task to cultivate strong relationships, but after taking the time and necessary steps to build them, the press coverage will be worth it.

You have to ask yourself if it is worth it to play the PR game. Any lawyer who has built a career playing the "PR game" will tell you it absolutely is.

Digital

Almost every law firm has a website, and has probably had one for a couple of decades. Many law firms have responsive sites and those that don't have one need one.

A responsive website uses HTML and CSS to automatically resize, hide, shrink, or enlarge, a website, to make it look good on all devices (desktops, tablets, and phones).

Having a responsive site is important since prospective clients are using modern technology such as smartphones to make hiring decisions before ever meeting in person. The firm's website provides an opportunity to make a strong first impression on potential clients.

Some firms opt to grab the visitor with a striking design, others pepper the home page with recent outstanding results, while others use video to capture the visitor. In any case, great sites give visitors reason to stay, and incorporate calls to action. Make sure the website has a Privacy Policy and is ADA compliant.

Complementary strategies include Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Social Media, both focusing on efforts to drive visitors to appropriate website landing pages. A strong "on page" and "off page" SEO campaign will leverage keyword-rich content to establish your firm as a thought leader in its space.

And, yes, content is king. The more relevant and targeted content a firm is able to produce the better its SEO strategy will be.

Law firms with leaders who encourage firm members and associates to write articles, short blog entries and other pieces of content have a leg up on those that don't. These pieces of content take on average thirty minutes to write

and can even be “ghostwritten” by marketing professionals, whether in house or out.

Some firms, mostly criminal and PI firms, use Google Ads, or Pay Per Click (PPC), to drive traffic to the website.

PPC isn't for every firm, however those with PPC budgets need to be careful when it comes to keyword selection so they don't spend all their money with not so great results. Consider investing in PPC advertising if business comes from the internet.

Organic marketing and branding complemented by a focused Google Ad strategy can bolster traffic and lead to conversions when creating campaigns around specific queries. When the firm decides to run a PPC campaign, the firm should hire an agency to run top-notch campaigns using relevant ad copy.

Website analytics provide the firm with a wealth of valuable and actionable information. To begin this process, start using Google Analytics.

By using Google Analytics, a firm can learn about who is visiting the website, how visitors are finding the site, and which pages they visit. This data, along with other key metrics, must be used to optimize the website and reach more potential clients.

A comprehensive social media strategy utilizes social platforms, such as LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter to reinforce the firm's brand and create more funnels to the law firm website. Firms that create internal social media guidelines help ensure that the right people are posting to the social media handles.

Firms have different personalities and thus different approaches to social media. Some firms like to repurpose relevant outside content and engage with thought leaders, while others use social media to simply repurpose important firm-only content.

Video content is best suited to Facebook and Instagram, industry updates and long form written content are most appropriate for LinkedIn and short updates and article sharing are best for Twitter.

Videos are easily uploaded to YouTube and links are created to share on social media. Aim to align social media content distribution with the firm's personality.



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Effective Emails

Email marketing is far from dead. Despite the attention placed on social media marketing, email marketing continues to be an effective channel to engage your audience.


Email newsletters offer a consistent method of spreading company updates and any other information that is relevant to clients that want to hear from you. Sending email newsletters to clients and prospective clients will keep the firm “top of mind” the next time a demand hits.

Firms with multiple practice areas should segment mailings and send relevant, customized newsletters to different audiences. Consider using a marketing platform like HubSpot to segment lists and build scheduled and automated emails for distribution.

In addition to a robust marketing platform, HubSpot also provides powerful tools to manage your contacts and monitor their marketing activity.

HubSpot's CRM (Customer Relationship Management) is free to use, but firms that desire leads and clients should consider Hubspot's premium software packages to consolidate marketing efforts into one comprehensive resource. To help build, execute and manage your CRM and marketing strategy, connect with a HubSpot Certified Agency to ensure that you are using HubSpot to its full potential.

This cursory overview of the marketing tactics law firms are employing does not dive into the methods of strong execution since most lawyers do not have the time to run the marketing campaigns.

To succeed, the professionals implementing these tactics via the direction of an overall strategic plan must be careful and thorough. With the right team in place, any law firm can set itself apart and increase its bottom line. 

SFVBA Inclusion & Diversity and Membership & Marketing Committees

DINNER AT MY PLACE

A member benefit to help members get to know each other in an intimate setting and spur referrals.

Thursday, March 26
6:30 PM | Granada Hills



\$25 to attend one dinner.