

My 12 Top Tips for Marketing Your Law Firm

With more than 1 million attorneys in the U.S. and approximately 45,000 individuals graduating from law schools every year, law firm marketing isn't an option. It's essential!

Here are my 12 top tips for marketing your firm's legal services.

#1. Brand your firm. Successful businesses like Apple, Mercedes Benz, Holiday Inn, Band Aid, and McDonalds have strong brands, or personalities. When people think of these companies, specific images and characteristics come to mind, which can predispose those individuals to do business with them.

To create a powerful brand for your law firm, identify the qualities you want people to associate with it -- how you want to be perceived relative to your competition. Then, make sure that everything about your business reinforces that image, including your firm's letterhead, web site, advertising, the way you and your employees interact with clients and potential clients -- even your office decor.

#2. Evaluate your web site. Your web site is your firm's digital calling card. This is because for many potential clients it's the very first impression they'll have of your business, and that impression can make the difference between them contacting your firm for legal help or looking for a different law firm to work with. So it's critical that your web site convey a positive image of your business. With this in mind, ask yourself the following: Is my site visually interesting and informative? Does it provide a good overview of the services my firm provides? Does the site speak directly to my potential clients? Does it reinforce my business' brand?

Suggestion: I'm guessing that it will be difficult if not impossible for you to answer the previous questions honestly and objectively because it's your web site after all. So ask some people you respect and whom you will believe will be brutally honest to critique the site for you. Here are some of the questions they should answer: What do you like and not like about my firm's web site; if you were looking for legal help does it provide you with enough information that you would contact my firm; is there anything you would like to know about my law firm that the site doesn't tell you; what impressions do you have about my firm after visiting the web site -- what three words would you use to describe my law firm? If the feedback you receive highlights problems and if the image your web site conveys doesn't reflect the way you want your firm to be perceived, get help from a marketing professional.

Earlier this year, a small business owner contacted me for marketing help, including help with her web site. The site was not well organized and the web copy was too long, poorly written, key points and calls to action were unclear and it was not key word optimized. Also, from a brand-building perspective, the copy totally failed to convey the warm, friendly and compassionate approach to service delivery that has been

key to my client's success. Now that I've totally revamped the site, it's a much more effective marketing tool for her business.

#3. Become a Recognized Expert – someone the media turn to when they want a quote or an interview related to your area of expertise. Begin this effort by building your visibility among the local media in your area and once you've become comfortable talking to them, start positioning yourself as an expert with the national media.

Over a period of a couple years, I turned a successful bankruptcy attorney into a national expert on consumer credit and money troubles. He did numerous interviews with national print, TV and radio. As his visibility in the media built, his reputation in the community where his law office was located increased, and his practice grew rapidly. That visibility also helped him land numerous book deals about topics related to his areas of expertise as well as his own local radio show and a regular column in a local business journal.

Make the most of any media attention you receive by blogging about it when appropriate and by adding links to your web site whenever you are quoted in an article or do a TV or radio interview. Also, if you are quoted in or interviewed by any well-known national media outlets, consider featuring their logos on your site's opening page. For an example of what I am suggesting, see what a non-attorney client of mine has done at his web site: <http://consumerrecoverynetwork.com>.

Suggestion: Consider investing in some media training before you speak to the media. A media coach can help you become comfortable and confident doing interviews and can help you figure out how to make your key points clearly and concisely.

#4. Write a book related to your area of expertise. Having a book with your name on it is a great way to enhance your reputation and to generate media attention for yourself and your firm. Also, being able to hand prospective clients a copy of your very own book is a sure fire way to impress them!

Suggestion: If you don't like to write or see no way that you'll ever get a book written given everything else that's on your plate, hire an experienced ghostwriter to do it for you.

After months of trying to find the time to write a basic book on the whys and hows of asset protection planning that he could give to prospective clients, a successful estate-planning attorney hired me to write the book for him. After an initial meeting during which he conveyed his vision for his book and I explained how I worked, I developed a chapter-by-chapter outline for the book, revised the outline based on the attorney's input and then began writing using information he provided to me as well as my own research. Today, the book is drafted; we are working on some minor final revisions; and we will begin the publishing process soon.

If you'd like to learn about all 21 of the books I've ghosted or co-authored – mostly for attorneys – go to <http://www.get-your-message-out.com/I-write-books.html>.

One other thing! Don't let concerns about finding an agent and a traditional publisher stop you from becoming a published author. E-books and print-on-demand (POD) publishers are growing in popularity and increasingly, these forms of publishing are seen as legitimate options for people who want to get their books into print. My estate planning attorney client for example, will probably work with a POD publisher and he may also make his book available as a download on his law firm web site.

#5. Begin blogging. Add a blog to your web site and write about topics you believe will be interesting and useful to your current and potential clients. Also, help drive traffic to your site by turning selected blog posts into articles that you publish on highly ranked articles web sites like Ezinearticles.com.

Suggestion: If you don't have time to blog at least a couple times a week or if you don't like to write, ask someone with your firm to blog for you or hire a professional writer.

I regularly edit and often do complete rewrites of blogs for one of my clients. She has great ideas for blog subjects, but she recognizes that she does not always do a good job of getting her points across when she writes.

#6. Develop and implement a sensible social media strategy. If you are like a lot of my clients, you may be resistant to becoming active on social networking sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter because the process feels intimidating, you don't know where to begin, or because you question the value of social media marketing to your business. But like I tell my clients, becoming active on those sites can pay you dividends. Not only do the sites offer you opportunities to communicate directly with members of your target audience and to learn from others in your same profession, but also they can even provide you with a no-cost means of doing some informal market research. Furthermore, you don't have to become a visible presence on every single social media site right away, or even ever. Instead, establish your social media goals, develop a strategy for achieving them, which includes deciding which sites you'll focus on, and then implement your strategy, slowly and deliberately. Implementation includes spending time at the start of each day reading the comments that have been posted on the sites you've decided to become active on, answering questions, initiating discussions, making announcements, and so on, and then doing the same at least once more each day.

Not long ago I helped a client with a new and innovative web-based business become comfortable promoting its services using social media. Initially she was very reluctant and even fearful about becoming active on social media sites, mainly because she did not understand their potential for her and was not sure what she had to offer. I helped this client understand how her business could benefit, worked with her on setting some realistic goals, provided her with ideas for topics she could discuss on the sites, found a specialized social media site that was perfect for her given the nature of her business, researched the

appropriate discussion groups she should join on that specific site as well as on LinkedIn, and wrote her profile for each site. Now that my client is actively engaged in social media marketing, I provide her with on-going advice and feedback. Meanwhile, her confidence has grown and her appreciation for the potential benefits of the sites has increased. I even think she's beginning to like this kind of marketing!

Suggestion: Don't become impatient if you do not realize immediate benefits from your social media efforts. Getting results takes time and consistency. The longer you stick with it, the more you'll understand the potential of social media marketing to your firm.

#7. Underwrite an event in your community. Helping sponsor an event in your town is an excellent way to generate goodwill and visibility for your firm. You can underwrite an existing event or you can begin your own. When you are deciding on an event, choose one with appeal to the members of your target market. Events to consider include a lecture series, a run, a neighborhood festival, a bike race, golf tournament, or a charitable or arts event, among others.

I've used events to help many clients increase their visibility and sales revenues. Those events have ranged from the serious to the wacky. For example, I helped an attorney organize an evening seminar for people with money troubles; I worked with a paint-your-own-pottery shop on an event that involved high profile local chefs each painting a piece of pottery that we later auctioned off for charity; and I even helped a bridal shop organize an event during which a couple dressed like a bride and groom skydived out of a plane during a bridal expo. Not only did I plan these events, but I also helped to generate media attention for each of them.

#8. Start speaking. Most communities have a wealth of local organizations that are always looking for interesting breakfast or lunchtime speakers. A compelling talk about a timely or useful topic followed by a question and answer session can be an excellent way to showcase your knowledge and inform potential clients about your firm and its services. Be sure to bring plenty of business cards to hand out afterwards, and if you've authored a book, find out if you can sell autographed copies before or after your talk.

#9. Publish an e-newsletter. Delivering timely, useful and interesting information directly into the e-mail boxes of your current and potential clients via a newsletter is a great way to provide them with regular reminders of your firm and its services.

#10. Conduct free webinars on subjects of interest to your clients and potential clients. A webinar is a live, online, interactive seminar conducted using a hosting service. Participants register for the event online and participate in the webinar via computer from the comfort of their own homes or offices after calling a special phone number or logging in at a website.

A webinar gives you an opportunity to showcase your knowledge, establish personal connections with the participants, answer their questions and gain insights into their legal concerns and interests. It can be a

great tool for marketing your services, strengthening your relationship with your existing clients and doing some informal market research.

An international training organization wanted to get the word out about its webinars. I did that using online newsletters, press releases and online advertising. Presently, I am working with two clients both of whom will soon be doing webinars for the first time. I will help them get the events set up, work with them on their webinar topics and help promote their events using social media, online advertising, their blogs and traditional public relations.

#11. Blow your own horn. Keep your firm in the news by sending out periodic press releases to the appropriate media when you have something important to announce. For example, you've hired a new attorney, you've expanded your services, your firm is involved in a community event, you just had your first book published, you're speaking at an important conference, and so on.

Over the years, I've written more press releases than I can count! Those releases have made the difference between businesses and their owners receiving little or no attention for their services, products, milestones, and achievements and having local and/or national media take notice of their news and helping to spread the word via articles, print mentions, and interviews.

#12. Tell stories. Whenever possible, showcase the success your firm has had helping clients resolve their legal problems or avoid problems by telling their stories. The stories will help build trust in your firm's capabilities and in its commitment to its clients and reassure potential clients that working with your firm would be a good investment. Use anecdotes to illustrate your key points in all of your communications -- on your firm's web site, in your blog, in the presentations you make, during the webinars you conduct, and so on.

If you have questions about any of my marketing tips or would like help implementing them, get in touch at mrpraustin@gmail.com or 512 441 5212. For information about my services, and my professional background and experience, go to <http://www.get-your-message-out.com>. Be sure to check out my affordable public relations packages and my public relations coaching services while you are there.