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LEGAL MARKETING

Ideas to Get Credentialed and Develop Your Own Reputation

BY STACY WEST CLARK

Special to the Legal

In many law firms, senior partners with well-known practices and reputations can overshadow the business development efforts of younger partners and associates. Their reputations can loom extremely large. This can cause younger lawyers great frustration in jumpstarting their own marketing efforts. However, there are easy tried-and-true ways for a junior lawyer to slowly, yet predictably, get out of the shadow of a senior lawyer and develop his or her own reputation and client roster. Here are some ideas:

1. Pick an area of law you intend to specialize in because you love it and there is a need for it. Then, go deep and start credentialing yourself by engaging in these activities:

- Write articles under your own name and get them published in periodicals or online sources read by your target audiences. Aim to



STACY WEST CLARK

has been helping Pennsylvania lawyers and law firms grow their revenues for over 25 years. She is a former attorney with Morgan, Lewis & Bockius and was its first marketing director. She is

president of Stacy Clark Marketing LLC. Visit her website at www.stacyclarkmarketing.com.

write two to three articles a year. Share your published articles with contacts, referral sources and clients.

- Write client alerts under your own name. Share them with reporters who cover the relevant area.

- Consider a blog.

- Speak to targeted industry, trade or client groups. Be on a few CLE panels. Issue a press release on your speech. Offer to give it to other businesses onsite.

- Become active in relevant trade or industry groups—where clients and referral sources are. Go for a leadership position within the organization. Head a

committee first and then aim for a board position.

- Constantly add all of this information to your bios.

2. Know how to talk about your practice area and look the part. Have an “elevator speech” that rolls off your tongue easily and descriptively. Dress like the rainmaker partner whose practice you are trying to emulate. Be the best ambassador for your brand.

3. Monitor national and local legislation and be the first to write or blog about it. Write about its ramifications for legal, industry or business periodicals. Share your insight with reporters who cover such beats.

4. Use social media to comment on new case law, trends and new legislation. Consider participating in LinkedIn groups and even starting a group of your own.

5. Identify reporters who cover your practice area. Reach out to them with background for stories they are writing. Be a resource

and they will contact you for future stories.

6. Look for people your own age to network with as senior lawyers won't be doing that in these circles. Consider creating your own network of non-competing "friends." One network could include lawyers who don't compete with you or lawyers in much larger or smaller firms who might need your help. A second network might consist of "referrers," like an accountant, a broker, a financial planner, and a private investigator. These networks will be your own—not those of the senior lawyer.

7. Provide value to law school friends and colleagues outside the firm. Look for ways to send them work, nominate them for awards or be a supporter of their practices in other ways. Keep your classmates aware of your professional activities. Submit news to your class columns.

8. Make sure your family and friends know what you do so they can be positive "mouth-pieces" for your practice. Don't assume they know.

9. Learn everything you can from the senior lawyers—particularly about the way they market—and then go do it. Ask to shadow them when they go on pitch meetings.

10. Consider getting active in cultural, community, civic and charitable groups that appeal to you—particularly those that have "young" membership categories. Form your own

relationships with colleagues in these groups.

11. Market yourself to other lawyers in the firm. Sometimes, they will be looking to take a younger and less expensive attorney with them to cross-selling meetings. Make sure they know your area of specialization. Share your client alerts and articles with them. Offer to do onsite presentations for their clients.

*Be the lawyer who does
not charge for everything.
Answer questions where
you can for free.*

12. Have your own interests outside of your practice and pursue them with vigor. You are your own person and when you dive into your outside interests, your individuality will shine and you will be able to cultivate new contacts, friends and colleagues.

13. Be the lawyer who does not charge for everything. Answer questions where you can for free. Be a real "friend" in this way to your business contacts and colleagues and they will remember you when they have an important case. In this same vein, be a problem-solver for your business friends. If they are looking for a divorce or immigration attorney, get them the

names of three. If they are considering an office move, send them the names of some great commercial brokers.

14. When you win a case or close a deal, get some publicity for it if your client would not mind. There are many legal outlets looking for interesting news of verdicts and settlements. Contact me for their names if you like.

15. Similarly, when you do the activities in the first item above, send out a press release to your community, news, business and alumni publications that take such news. All of this helps keep you visible with targeted audiences.

16. Even when you are second-chairing a case with the senior partner, get to know and befriend your contemporaries at the client organization. Someday, they will be the ones handing out the legal work.

Try doing a combination of as many of these ideas as possible for 18 months. Watch your visibility, professional stature, client roster and referral network grow. As always, I am rooting for you. •