

The Legal Intelligencer

THE OLDEST LAW JOURNAL IN THE UNITED STATES 1843-2017

PHILADELPHIA, TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2017

VOL 255 • NO. 54

An **ALM** Publication

LEGAL MARKETING

Keep Things Short and To the Point: Marketing in Minutes

BY STACY WEST CLARK

Special to the Legal

“I don’t have time to market.”

That sentence is said by lawyers every day. I have been counseling lawyers on how to effectively market for over 30 years and I am here to tell you the contrary is true.

This is because of the following truisms that I believe exist when it comes to attorney business development:

- No one wants to read anything long.
- No one wants to sit in a meeting or at a presentation for a long period of time.
- No one wants to be on the phone for a long time.
- Your target audiences will give you a nanosecond to explain why they should care about you or the information you want to provide them with—before they tune you out and go back to things they care about.

Therefore, your marketing (not legal practice) efforts should focus on keeping things short and to the point. Here are some ideas you can take to the bank with you:



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has been helping lawyers and law firms expand their practices for more than 25 years. She is a former attorney with Morgan, Lewis & Bockius and was the firm’s first marketing

director. She is president of Stacy Clark Marketing, www.stacyclarkmarketing.com, a firm that helps law firms grow their businesses.

MARKETING HABITS

It has long been espoused by the marketing gods and goddesses that a minimum of four hours per week is required to build a solid book of business. Most lawyers with multimillion-dollar books spend in general 12 to 15 hours a week on business development. While this may sound like a lot, it is really a lot like breathing to these successful lawyers. It is not a burden to them—they thrive on the pursuit. They calendar a lunch and a breakfast a week with a referral source, client, prospect or fellow member of a board on which they sit. They book these appointments out in three month intervals. They

also calendar gratis client on-site visits (best thing you can spend your money on) out in the same way. They schedule a speech/talk a quarter. All of these activities are meant to take an hour or so—no more. The only exception to this rule is when visiting a client on-site, you should always offer to stay as long as the client wishes.

PRACTICE AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Whether on a website, or in hard-copy form, spend less prose on all the things your firm does and focus on the successful results you have achieved. The business department of Chester County’s

Your marketing (not legal practice) efforts should focus on keeping things short and to the point.

MacElree Harvey just issued a one-page write-up on the over half a billion dollars in deals it did last year. The entire piece was extremely short on text but very

powerful in that the dollar amount was blasted as a large headline. It certainly elevated their status as a major business law firm not just in Philadelphia—but beyond.

ALERTS

Client alerts should be no longer than two to three paragraphs tops. Here are my guidelines:

Paragraph one: “This is what happened”; paragraph two: “This is how this development could affect you/your business”; and paragraph three (and you do not always need a three): “What you should or need to do now.” I mentioned in a previous article, “Law Firms Doing Really Cool Things,” published Aug. 10, 2016, in *The Legal*, that Winston and Strawn’s advertising alerts’ did basically just this and are terrific. Seyfarth Shaw has a “One Minute Memo” that I also think is particularly good.

SEMINARS

In my view, the shorter the better. It is hard to listen to even the best lawyers speak for hours. KYW Radio does its news cycle in 22 minutes. My guess is that they have researched our attention spans for listening to information and arrived at that formula deliberately. People want to return to work. Montgomery County’s Hamburg Rubin Mullin Maxwell & Lupin has created a series of intimate educational programs for clients of its business advisory group that last—with food, networking and a talk—for just 120 minutes.

NEWSLETTERS

If your firm is putting out a newsletter, the articles should be

extremely short and get straight to the “why should I care” point. No legalese. Follow the guidelines for alerts above. Graphics and images are extremely helpful to break up the text.

ADS

Over time, I have realized that very, very few people read beyond the headlines of ads—myself included. Therefore, if you are doing a promotional ad or celebrating the accomplishments of a charity or client in a congratulatory ad, do it with a great and powerful headline and then, maybe a sentence or two (tops). A powerful graphically designed headline, contact information and logo is often all you need to properly grab the reader’s attention and make your point.

ONE-ON-ONE COMMUNICATIONS

I think the best marketing you can do is one-on-one. Therefore, every day, take five minutes to call one client and referral source—expressly off the clock—to just check in and/or give a status report. In my view, a call, with the warmth of your voice and personality and character, trumps an email.

HANDWRITTEN NOTES

I have always said that a handwritten note—sent after a meeting/meal with a client, prospective client or referral source—trumps an email. Handwritten notes should be extremely short (no longer than four sentences) and personal.

SPEAKING, WRITING AND GETTING INFORMATION OUT TO THE PRESS

I like to say you should get four to five bags for the buck out of any nonbillable marketing activity you undertake. What do I mean by this? Whenever you write an article, the article should be turned into a talk you can deliver, then into a very short client alert, which in turn can be sent to interested reporters. Similarly, when you give a talk, the speech should be made into an article, client alert and so forth. By recycling your efforts, you will be able to reach a vast audience in this way and capitalize on every one of your nonbillable minutes.

THE EXCEPTION TO MY BREVITY RULE

Your client invoice: This is something that should never be too brief. This is a critical document to your client and they will scrutinize it—so indicate “value-added services” you provided, work done for free and important results achieved.

If you would like to talk about any of this, I would be happy to have a “brief” conversation. As always, I am rooting for you. •