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LEGAL MARKETING

10 Marketing Activities Small, Midsized Firms Should Engage in Now

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I am sad to say this but many small to midsized law firms are seeing flat revenues. This trend can be reversed if law firm leaders encourage their colleagues to do the following right away.

- Go out and visit your top clients off the clock. Ask them what challenges they are facing and what are their goals for the year so you can be the best possible advocate for them. Ask them what you can do better. It's a tough question to ask—but in asking, you will form a tighter relationship with your clients. If they have suggestions, implement them and let them know you did so.

- Go out and visit your top referral sources and find out what a great referral would look like to them. Try to make that happen or look for ways to make their practice/life better so they in turn will think of you kindly down the road.

- Credential yourself. At least twice a year, preferably more, speak, write, host, lead and start the conversation in your area of practice. Do this offline and online. Two lawyers who do this extremely well are immigration law attorneys H. Ronald Klasko and William Stock of Klasko Immigration Law Partners who are extremely active and have leadership roles within the American Immigration Lawyers Association and are prolific and current writers and speakers.

- Find a niche. Decide on a practice area you want to own, or an industry you want to have great depth in and go deep. Join and become active in the relevant trade industry and if there is none, consider starting one. Write articles targeted at the chosen industry. Blog about your niche or create a microsite to show deep expertise and ownership of the area.

- Create referral networks. It is likely if you are in a small to midsized firm, you have the need to refer out to “legal specialists” in such areas as personal injury, immigration, tax, real estate, intellectual property, transactional work and more from time to time. Or your firm may be conflicted out of some great work. Set up a network of lawyers from your law school or from the legal community at large to whom you can refer work. In addition,



consider setting up networks of noncompeting professional service providers like accountants, brokers, analysts, detectives and more. Years ago, I created a referral network of leading women attorneys whose firms did not compete. We enjoyed several dinners and referrals ensued.

- Find ways to communicate with your clients, referral sources and friends of the firm in a way that is meaningful to them. This can take the form of e-blasts, a regular newsletter or video. Check out MacElree Harvey's beautiful and very client-friendly newsletter. It truly makes clients feel that they are in strong hands. Make sure your communications are short, have illustrations where you can and specifically discuss why and how the news affects your readership along with what action steps they need to take now.

- Aim to cross-market your firm's services if you can. This is a doable task for general practice firms. Look at your litigation clients and figure out who may need personal services like family law and trusts and estates. Identify who may need start-up or transactional work. Most clients want to be working with just one law firm that intimately understands their business and personal life outside of work. It is also easier to talk about how great your colleagues are than how you are an outstanding lawyer.

- Look for ways to spread the word about litigation avoidance and compliance. Clients don't

want to be sued and they don't want the government to shut them down. Create communications or hold programs for your clients that help them stay out of legal trouble and show that you command the area.

- Get press or attention for your endeavors. There are many news outlets that are eagerly looking for news of your speeches, your going on to a board, your verdicts and settlements and your transactions. Identify them—look at bar, trade, alumni, general business publications and more and set up easy systems within your firm to alert them of your news. Put the news always on your firm and LinkedIn bios.

- Do an audit of the experience of being a client. You may think things are terrific but dig deep. Check how phones are answered. See how guests are greeted. Figure out how fast phone calls and emails are returned. I have done these audits for many firms and the results have been extremely eye-opening. Work with your staff to ensure they are giving outstanding service to your clients. Thank your staff and tell them how important they are to the firm and its clients. Communicate with them about the firm's work so they can be an ambassador for the firm in their own world. Ask for their suggestions on how the experience of being a client of the firm can be improved. Your staff is critical in the delivery of outstanding service.

These 10 activities really work. Take this list into your next management committee meeting and get to work. I am rooting for you.

Stacy West Clark 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.

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