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LEGAL MARKETING

Attending a CLE or Educational Conference? Take Advantage of Marketing Opportunities

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Special to the Legal

OK folks. Do you dread attending a CLE? Think it is a waste of time—other than getting you your needed credits? It's not!

You can totally capitalize on your attendance at these nonbillable events—from a business development standpoint. They are fantastic (and highly underutilized) marketing opportunities dropped in your lap.

Attending a CLE or industry conference gives you the chance to provide a value-added service to your clients and referral sources, get possible new work, help your colleagues cross-sell and further credential yourself as knowledgeable in a particular area.

Your checklist:

BEFORE GOING TO AN EVENT

Ask the host for the registration list. See who is going that you might want to meet. Do some preliminary research on them. Make a plan to find them/meet them. Post your upcoming attendance on LinkedIn to see who else may be attending.

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AT THE EVENT

Take notes on what might affect your clients/referral sources and how. You will utilize these after the event per below.

Introduce yourself to the host and any speaker who sparked your interest or who could help you down the road.

Introduce yourself to one to two new people at the event. That's it—one to two people. You can start with who is sitting on either side of you. What you are trying to do here is make a connection and start a relationship—not sell. Ask questions about their practice. "Hi. What brings you here today? What are you most interested in learning about? Who is your target/favorite kind of clients. What do you like to do when you are not working, how about those Eagles or Flyers or Union?" This should be a comfortable conversation with your aim being to be friendly, learn about a person's life or work and importantly, have a reason to converse again with them.

AFTER THE EVENT: THE MONEY SHOT!

- **Act right away.**

If you spoke with anyone at the event—follow up on something you discussed. It doesn't have to be on a legal topic at all. Just have a reason to write a short note, send an article or decision of interest, invite them to meet and talk about the kinds of clients they are looking for so you can possibly send referrals and much more. You get the picture. You want to start something here. Calendar another "touch" in a month or so and make it meaningful to them on a professional or personal level.

Take those notes you took at the event and:

Send your clients a three-paragraph (tops) personal letter that says: Paragraph One: I recently attended a conference on X and wanted to share with you some top takeaways and how they might affect you/your business. Paragraph Two: Play out one to two developments that could affect them that you learned. Paragraph Three: Here are two things you might do to act now to take advantage of this news. That's it—short and sweet, free—and helpful to them.

Send your referral sources the same kind of personal letter—FYI, Invite them to share the news with their clients (a touch that would make them look good to their target audience—bonus points!).

Send your mailing list (or the firm's master client list) a three-paragragh client alert: This is the development; This is how it might affect X people/companies; What they should consider doing.

Add contact information (a specific name—not "contact us").

If you know any reporter is covering the topic (or might want to) send him a personal email with the development and invite them to follow-up with you for more details or real-life examples.

Speak at your department's next meeting about the development. Educate your colleagues. Then, speak at other department meetings in your firm to make your colleagues knowledgeable with a news snippet—and—position you further as an expert they can refer work to in the future.

Take your client alert and turn it into an article that can be published in a trade or industry publication—or even a community paper. Who is the audience for the news; there is an online or print publication for them.

Offer to be a speaker on the topic at a client's HQ. Can you offer CLE or CE to the in-house staff? An on-site program can be a wonderful "free" benefit to your clients if you make it very interesting and compelling (and short of course).

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Repeat the talk at a colleague's client's HQ, you are now giving a great benefit to a law firm colleague—making them look good to their client with a free short presentation to their key managers, risk team, legal team, etc.

Post your client alert on your LinkedIn page, your bio and on your firm's website. Compliment the speaker(s) on LinkedIn. Everyone loves (and remembers) a compliment!

•And then ... act again.

In marketing your practice—we are never "one and done." Continued meaningful followup is so key. So, if your actions produce any responses, here is what you should do next:

If anyone (your colleagues, clients, referral sources, etc.) reaches out to you, act. Respond. Calendar the next touch or interaction with them.

Thank the program host. Offer to be on a panel at the next program they organize. Spot your next opportunity to attend something and squeeze every business development drop out of your expenditure of nonbillable time at it!

Put these ideas to work for your practice. I'm happy to brainstorm with you before or after you attend something. You can do it.

Email me at stacy@stacyclarkmarketing.com on other business development topics/tips you want me to cover in future columns. •