

The Seven Habits of Unsuccessful Marketers

SALLY J. SCHMIDT

Looking over the titles of popular business tomes, most seem to highlight success strategies. There's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, *The One Minute Manager* and *The Millionaire Next Door* to name a few. While we can learn by exploring success stories, it is sometimes every bit as useful, if not more so, to review failures.

What makes a marketing initiative or strategy unsuccessful? What activities can be eliminated from your marketing effort? There are seven key mistakes made repeatedly by law firms.

Bad Habit #1: Doing It Once

A law firm places a tombstone ad about its environmental expertise in one issue of a statewide bar journal, hoping to solicit referrals. A tax practice group hosts a one-time seminar for accountants on emerging, controversial issues. An international practice group sends out one update on some proposed regulations. Each activity is the first and last of its kind.

If your firm is looking to eliminate something from its marketing strategy, start with the activities for which there is no follow-up or reinforcement. If you place one ad in one place, what are the

odds that targeted readers will see that page? They may skip the article printed near your ad, be on vacation when the issue comes out or simply put the journal into a "to be read" box. Every good marketer knows that marketing results require reinforcement and follow-up. An effective advertising campaign requires at least six insertions.

Bad Habit #2: Reacting Rather Than Acting

The Chamber of Commerce wants your firm to sponsor a table at a dinner event. A local business publication is highlighting real estate and suggests that your firm buy an ad. An employee benefits consulting firm asks if you would like to cosponsor a seminar.

Many law firm marketing efforts are completely reactive—they respond to requests and opportunities. Instead, your firm or practice groups should be

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Sally J. Schmidt (schmidtmarketing@msn.com), president of Schmidt Marketing, Inc., has counseled over 225 law firm clients during the past 14 years. She has an MBA in marketing and was the first president of the Legal Marketing Association.



planning. You should determine what initiatives make the most sense in positioning the firm before its target market. Evaluate real opportunities that arise; but think proactively rather than simply writing a check when someone asks for it.

Bad Habit #3: Copying

Your Competition

Your closest competitor is developing a "branding" campaign, so your firm wants one, too. They hired a marketing director, so your firm hires one, too. They have an IP newsletter, so you start one, too.

The problem is that truly effective marketing strategies are customized to

a firm's situation and opportunities. The first one "to market" with a product or service gains a tremendous advantage in the minds of consumers. If your competitor is already hosting an annual business forum, you need to think of something different to get on the radar screens of the same audience.

Bad Habit #4: Setting Unrealistic Expectations

Your firm hosts a seminar for 50 human resources managers on labor and employment issues and half of the attendees are nonclients. After the program, your lawyers complain that the program wasn't effective because no new business was generated.

You need to be sure that what you expect from a particular initiative or effort is realistic. In this example, getting phone calls from nonclients after a seminar, while not unheard of, is not always to be expected. Companies that are not using your firm either think they do not need a lawyer or are working with another law firm. One seminar presentation is unlikely to break that mind-set or bond. Also, the attendee may not be the decision-maker for legal work.

A more reasonable objective for a seminar would be to create a perception of expertise and position your firm in front of representatives of nonclient companies.