

Marketing

Getting Proactive in Your Marketing Efforts: How to Take the Lead

SALLY J. SCHMIDT | If lawyers have a flaw in their marketing approach, it may be this: reacting. In other words, instead of setting out a strategy or seeking opportunities on their own, they often hold back and wait for someone to contact them—and then they respond in ways that fail to maximize the opportunity. There is, as you might guess, a better way.

Frequently lawyers invest time in marketing efforts almost by default. Something happens that requires they act, or someone contacts them with a request to join a board, an offer to give a speech, an invitation to a networking lunch or the like. As a result, they often fail to put their limited time into the best activities. Inevitably questions arise about whether the given lawyer's marketing efforts are a good investment of time or money for the firm.

Most marketing efforts would be both more successful and more efficient if lawyers took the lead and initiated activities instead of merely waiting for them to happen. The following provides several examples to illustrate the difference between these three approaches:



Sally J. Schmidt (sallyschmidt@schmidt-marketing.com), President of Schmidt Marketing, Inc., has counseled more than 400 law firm clients over the past 20 years. She was the first president of the Legal Marketing Association.

- Simply reacting to an opportunity
- Capitalizing on the opportunity with better execution
- Taking the lead by analyzing the opportunity and developing creative strategies

Improving Your Initiatives: Five Examples

Scenario: A publication invites you to write an article on a particular topic.

- **Reacting.** You do some research and write the article, meeting your word count and deadline.
- **Capitalizing.** You examine the publication's readership to better understand the audience. Who are they? What positions do they hold? How sophisticated are they? You review some past issues to determine the typical format and tone. You contact the publication's editor and a few clients for ideas on how to make your article more interesting and salient to the audience. You write in an appropriately practical, understandable and useful fashion.

- **Leading.** You think about the best audience for you and your practice. Who has the business you want to obtain? What positions do they hold or what areas of responsibility do they have? Does the publication in question really have the right audience for you? Are they potential clients (such as family-owned businesses, physicians, agribusinesses) or potential referral sources (like accountants, lawyers, valuation experts)? You do some research into what publications serve that audience. If they accept articles from outside authors, you pitch them an idea for an article on something novel, such as an emerging trend or a new way to handle an old issue.

Scenario: A lateral partner joins your firm with an impressive background and range of experience that some of your clients will find useful.

- **Reacting.** You make sure the firm's announcement of the hiring goes to clients and contacts you have on the master mailing list or in the firm database.
- **Capitalizing.** You send a personal letter to selected targets alerting them to the new partner's capabilities and background.
- **Leading.** Recognizing that the window of opportunity is small, you immediately take the new partner to lunch to talk about his practice and learn what he can do to help your clients. You