

Marketing

Keeping Up With Marketing Speak

SALLY J. SCHMIDT | If there's one thing I've learned about lawyers in my 20 years of consulting, it's this: Marketing buzzwords drive them crazy. Yet behind the jargon often can be found good ideas and information about useful trends, so it's important to stay informed about the terms of art.

For this reason, I have outlined a glossary of some of the current law firm marketing lingo. It's not meant to be comprehensive, but rather to offer plain-English explanations of certain key terms. Some of the terms may be familiar, others not so much. Also, as time passes, some of these terms will become fundamental, permanent parts of our marketing vocabulary, while others will likely be perceived as fads. But for today at least, you'll be up-to-date on "marketing speak."

Alumni program. When a law firm references an alumni program, it means alumni of the firm—lawyers who have left to go elsewhere (usually to noncompeting firms or companies). Alumni programs include everything from regular communications, such as newsletters, to in-person events,

like an annual gathering. One good indication of the popularity of alumni programs is that software is now being sold to law firms for the specific purpose of organizing and targeting former colleagues.

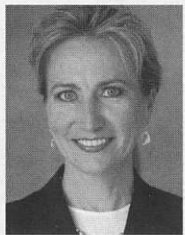
Analytics. This is a fancy term to describe ways to analyze data. Analytics involves all kinds of marketing-related information in law firms, from client retention rates to Web site usage. There are a number of companies offering software and services to assist firms in manipulating their data, with Redwood Analytics being perhaps the most well-known.

Benchmarking/Metrics. These two items come into play when you attempt to measure the firm's progress in marketing. Before engaging in a cross-selling initiative, for example, you might establish your metric as the average number of different legal services that your top 50 clients use (e.g., estate planning, real estate, employment). The benchmark—today's data against which you will measure future results—might be a number like 4.7.

Blog. You should know this one by now, but just in case: A blog, which is short for "Weblog," is like an online diary or a Web site that is continually updated with entries. Law-related blogs—sometimes referred to as blawgs—can be dedicated to a particular area of the law, such as anti-trust or "green," or an area of practice management, such as technology or marketing. Their number continues to explode. The *ABA Journal* dedicated its December 2007 cover story to "The Blawg 100," and estimates that 2,000 to 3,000 legal blogs now exist.

Branding. Most lawyers understand the idea of a brand, but many have trouble understanding how a law firm can create one. Put simply, a brand is a combination of name, words, designs and symbols that identifies a service and its provider and, through persistent use, differentiates the entity from its competitors. Law firms are seeking to build brands with everything from image and graphic identity programs (including logos, firm "colors" and so forth) to tag lines, positioning statements and points of differentiation.

Business development. This term is not just code for marketing. Business development means getting business in the door (or "sales" in a company's parlance). Business development activities in law firms include initiatives such as sales training for the lawyers, one-on-one coaching, assistance with pitches and proposals, and even hiring directors of business development.



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Chief marketing officer (CMO).

On December 1, 2007, the *American Lawyer* ran an article titled "Desperately Seeking CMOs." At that time, there were at least six high-profile CMO positions open among the nation's largest law firms. In theory, a CMO is a step above a marketing director and holds primary responsibility for the firm's marketing strategy.

Client team. A client team program is intended to provide a formal, systematic approach to serving a particular client. Many firms are implementing formal client teams that cut across practices and offices for their best clients. The teams are charged with identifying the client's unique needs and how the firm can better serve those needs, and then developing and executing client-specific activities. Client teams (which can include paralegals and staff, as well as lawyers) often result in an expanded "share of the client" for the firm.

Competitive intelligence (CI). This is a relatively new term for the legal industry. CI involves gathering, analyzing and applying information not just about competitors, but about clients, markets, industries, trends and related issues to assist in both tactical and strategic planning and decision making. (See Ann Lee Gibson's article on page 47 for a detailed primer on CI functions and assignments in law firms.)

Client relationship management (CRM). CRM systems are software applications that manage information on the firm's clients, prospects and other contacts. The sophisticated programs integrate with the firm's time and billing system. In addition, these multiuser programs allow firms to track contacts made, produce reports and, of course,

create customized mailing lists. Access to the system is often firmwide. The most popular products in the legal world are InterAction, ContactEase and the emerging CRM4Legal.

Podcast. A podcast is an audio or video digital file that can be accessed from a Web site or downloaded into an iPod or similar device for portable listening. Law firms are using podcasts to do briefings for clients, such as in on-demand seminars, and individual lawyers are using them to promote their expertise in particular areas. (See the Hot Buttons column in the January/February *Law Practice* to learn more about using podcasts for marketing.)

Positioning statement. This is a succinctly written expression of what defines and differentiates the firm. The firm should write a statement for each of its target markets.

Request for proposal (RFP). Certainly RFPs are not new to law firms. Companies have requested that firms submit proposals to provide legal services for some time now. But the use of RFPs has grown immensely and, as a result, law firms are doing more to improve the process at their end. Their activities include buying software to manage data (e.g., the RFP Machine), managing deal and case lists, tracking industry experience, setting up databases of lawyer bios, maintaining content that can be accessed across the firm, and tracking the firm's win ratio.

Return on investment (ROI). If you invest money in a marketing activity, what is the return? It's not always easy to measure—and it's certainly not always measured in terms of new business. For example, the suc-

cess of an electronic newsletter might be measured by the percentage of people who open the document when it hits their inboxes.

Here's a particularly good example, however: The Minneapolis law firm Leonard, Street and Deinard started a business development training and coaching program for its lawyers. Over a two-year period, the firm invested \$150,000 in training fees, events and sales incentives. After that time, the lawyers in the program had developed \$7.5 million in fee receipts, an average growth rate six times higher than their peer group. Now *that's* ROI.

Search engine optimization (SEO).

This term refers to efforts to improve the likelihood that a Web site will rank high in the results when someone enters relevant terms into an Internet search engine. Most law firms target Google, since agencies report that at least 50 percent of search engine referral traffic comes from Google. Some SEO efforts involve adding more searchable content within the site; others include imbedding words and tags, paying for search campaigns or sponsoring links.

Tag line. A tag line is a phrase or slogan of sorts that is intended to differentiate a law firm and make it more memorable to its audience. Hundreds of law firms have adopted tag lines, with just a few quick examples ranging from DLA Piper's "Everything matters" to Fredrikson & Byron's "Where law and business meet" to Graydon Head & Ritchey's "We represent success."

So there you have it, your marketing glossary—for today anyway. May you and your firm harvest good ideas and useful trends from it. **LP**