

From the Editors

Taylor's Perspective . . .

A Way with Words: Sally Schmidt Succeeds with Her Latest Marketing Book

What is it about the Midwest and law firm marketing?

For some reason, several of the legal profession's best law firm consultants who have a particular expertise in marketing hail from the heartland. From the Chicago area alone, there are three marketing maestros who are well-known from coast to coast: Ross Fishman, Larry Bodine, and now, with his departure last year from Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw, Jonathan Asperger, who has formed his own consultancy. Head north to the Twin Cities and you'll find consultant Sally Schmidt, the first president of the Legal Marketing Association. In her latest book, *Business Development for Lawyers: Strategies for Getting and Keeping Clients*, Schmidt shows why she's one of the best in the business.

In 16 chapters, *Business Development* offers readers a blueprint for generating new business and retaining and, importantly, satisfying existing clients. Virtually everything in the book steers lawyers and law firm CMOs to one crucial goal: differentiation. In today's legal market, competition is fierce and law firms, or for that matter solo practitioners, must find a way to distinguish themselves from others. Marketing can help do that.

Since the famous *Bates* Supreme Court decision 30 years ago that allowed attorneys to advertise their services, many people have written books about legal marketing. Frankly, most could cure insomnia. While the title of Schmidt's book may be prosaic, *Business Development* is anything but boring. Unlike many such guides to law firm marketing, Schmidt somehow avoids stating the obvious, padding the prose, or spewing the jargon.

On that last point, Schmidt implores readers, in a chapter entitled "Satisfying Clients and Building Loyalty," to "Speak and write in plain English. Clients don't like jargon." Clearly, Schmidt practices what she preaches as the book is clear and concise as well as colorful and well-crafted.

In that same chapter, Schmidt provides several other tips—the book is loaded with the sort of practical advice she's been offering clients for more than 20 years—including one that is simple yet surprisingly overlooked: "Call the client after key events to 'check in.' For example, after a day of meetings for your client, leave a message about how things went." A little of this checking in goes a long way; it lets the client know that, well, frankly, you care.

Business Development doesn't romanticize marketing efforts or offer promises that if you put in the time, you'll get results. As early as the introduction, Schmidt shows her candor. She writes that most rainmaking attorneys estimate that they spend anywhere from 250 to 500 hours each year on marketing. She then adds, "What can you expect from this investment in time? Unfortunately, the answer is not always clear"

What is clear is that the author knows her readership. She knows how lawyers think and how, increasingly, they feel pressure to develop business. While she advocates strongly for comprehensive law firm marketing—of course, that's her bread-and-butter—and outlines many different ways to interact with clients and potential clients, she doesn't push attorneys to be something they're not. That is, if an attorney doesn't enjoy public speaking, and yes there are more reticent lawyers