

### Marketing Without a Vision

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*"Our plans miscarry because they have no aim. When a man does not know what harbor he is making for, no wind is the right wind."*

—LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA, c. 4 B.C.-A.D. 65

**D**o you remember the Gerber slogan? I'd be surprised if you didn't: "Babies are our business, our only business."

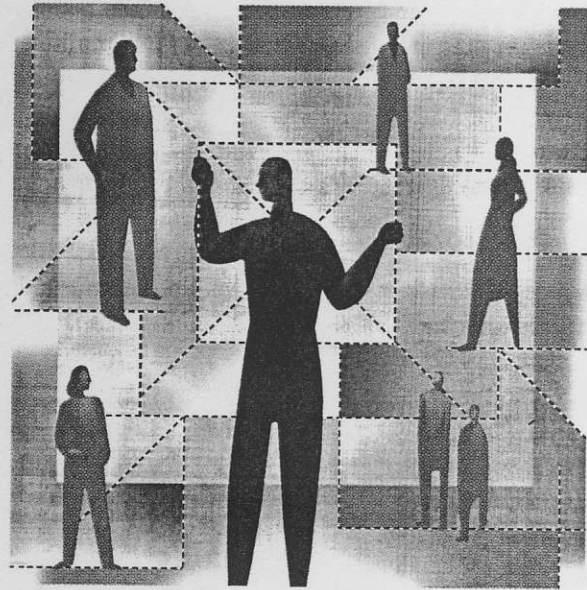
Now imagine that, shortly after running advertisements including this slogan, Gerber started selling frozen TV dinners for grown-ups. Or clothes for teen-agers. Not only would consumers be confused; they probably would question the soundness of the company's management strategy.

It's easy to believe a well-run organization wouldn't make this type of marketing error, one that so clearly demonstrates a lack of vision. But I regularly see similar examples in the marketing efforts of law firms. Consider:

- A law firm that built its entire advertising and positioning program around the fact that it limits its practice to one substantive area—and then begins practicing in another;



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- A law firm that represents plaintiffs in major litigation—and then hires a lawyer to build a corporate practice representing one-time defendants in the industry;
- A law firm that based its marketing efforts on seeking referrals from lawyers in nearby states—and then opens offices around the region.

Developing a vision for your firm can be difficult, but it's worth the effort. Firms that know where they want to go—and use that vision to chart their course—ultimately will be more successful.

#### Why a Vision Is Hard to Develop

Looking at law firm marketing efforts—particularly advertising, "branding" and other visible external programs—it's easy to conclude most firms don't have a clear vision. If they do, they don't communicate it very well.

There are many reasons law firms have difficulty developing and communicating a vision. For example:

- Firms don't give the process adequate time or attention. In their