

Play to Win

You're Not Busy? Marketing Activities to Get You Through a Work Drought

By [Sally J. Schmidt](#)

March 26, 2024

When you have extra time on your hands, fill it with business development and legal marketing activities that keep you busy and productive while positioning you for future success.

My coaching arrangements with law firms often have me working with their lawyers for two years or more. It is pretty common for them to experience a work drought at some point over that span of time. Sometimes new business is coming to them but it's not work they do themselves. Sometimes their desks are unexpectedly cleared — a client's demand for "pencils down," a deal that falls through or a surprising settlement. And sometimes the [practice or industry is just slow](#) — things like interest rates, government intervention or new competition can have a big impact on what comes in the door.

I'm Not Busy — Now What?

Lawyers tend to be successful overachievers; if they're not hitting their numbers or contributing in the way they think they should, they frequently react with despair. And often, unhappiness about performance can lead to inertia.

The reality is that getting business usually takes some time. Even the best efforts to drum up new clients or matters may not produce results quickly enough to fill your plate in the short term. So what are you to do?

Marketing Things to Do With Your Downtime

My suggestion if you have some extra time on your hands? Implement legal marketing and business development activities that will keep you busy and productive while positioning you for future success. Here are some examples.

1. Update Your Bio

Check your most recent firm web [bio](#) and see what revisions should be made. These could include new representative matters, a change in your practice focus, articles you've written, presentations you've given, changes to your outside activities — and maybe even your picture.

[Read: "Positioning Yourself for Online Opportunities."](#)

2. Review Your LinkedIn Profile

Similarly, look over your LinkedIn profile. Do the details need some updating?

3. Connect to People on LinkedIn

Spend some time identifying people with whom you should be connected — newer contacts, former colleagues or dormant clients, for example — and send personalized invitations to connect.

4. Create or Update Your Contact List

Organize your contacts so it will be easier for you to slice and dice in the future. Use the firm's [CRM](#) or start a spreadsheet and keep track of things like the industry of the client, the type of work that was done, the last date of contact, whether they are holiday card recipients and so on.

[Read: "Best Way to Organize Your Contacts."](#)

5. Pick a Certain Number of People to Contact

Make sure you reach out personally, whether through LinkedIn, email or a phone call. You can comment on a new position, ask how things are going generally or follow up about a matter that was concluded. Invite contacts to coffee, [start email conversations](#), invite them to sporting or cultural events — the choice is yours.

[Read: "Following Up Naturally: Tips for Nurturing Business Relationships."](#)

6. Send Some Personal Notes

Is there anyone who deserves special outreach? For example, you could thank a memorable college professor, [express appreciation](#) to a good referral source, reconnect with an old law school friend or contact a former client for updates.

7. Do Some Analysis

For example, where did you meet your five best clients? Who are your three top referral sources? By analyzing the past, you can often determine the best places to focus your future relationship- or profile-building efforts for similar results.

[Read: "What You Don't Know CAN Hurt You."](#)

8. Identify Events to Attend

Go online and see when appropriate conferences and meetings are scheduled and put them on your calendar so you don't miss them. Find out when proposals for presentations or panels are due and put together thoughts on topics or co-presenters before the deadlines.

[Read: "Look Outside the Legal Profession to Learn."](#)

9. Write!

Is there a matter that you have worked on or a topic you have followed in which others would be interested? Is there a presentation you've given that can be turned into an article? Whether it's short or long, you can then distribute new content through LinkedIn, email blasts or personal contacts.

[Read: "Writing Your Way to New Business."](#)

10. Conduct Some Research

Take this downtime to expand your knowledge! Do a deep dive on some prospects you'd like to target or an industry about which you'd like to know more. Armed with better information, you can develop an effective pursuit strategy.

[Read: "The Basics of Researching Your Target."](#)

11. Plan a Seminar or Webinar

Create an agenda and think about speakers. Co-host with a good referral source or colleague. Develop your invitation list. And, just as important, block a date so it happens!

Conclusion

I've been around long enough to know that business often comes when you least expect it. If you don't have a lot to do, keep yourself busy with important marketing and business development efforts that will make things easier when you do.

Sally Schmidt, President of Schmidt Marketing, Inc., helps lawyers and law firms grow their practices. She was a founder and the first President of the Legal Marketing Association, is a Fellow of the College of Law Practice Management and was one of the first inductees to LMA's Hall of Fame. Known for her practical advice, she is the author of two books, "[Marketing the Law Firm: Business Development Techniques](#)" and "[Business Development for Lawyers: Strategies for Getting and Keeping Clients](#)." Follow her @SallySchmidt.