Play to Win

Follow Up to Increase Your Chances of Getting Business

By Sally J. Schmidt | May.23.18 | Business Development, Daily Dispatch, Legal Marketing, Play to Win, Strategy

You undoubtedly have heard how important follow-up is to marketing and business development. Clients and referral sources are most likely to refer business to people they have heard from or seen in the prior three months, which means a sustained effort to stay in touch is required.

We also know that (depending on who you read) business will come after five, seven or even more quality contacts with a single prospect. Yet few lawyers will make nearly that many approaches. Finally, marketing success involves both time and timing; you often don't know when people will need your services so you need to be patient and stay top of mind.

Why don't lawyers follow up with their business development targets? I think there are two primary reasons:

- Many lawyers see their marketing activities as isolated events. Spoke at a seminar. Check. Attended a conference. Check. Wrote a blog post. Check. Once the activity is done, they move on.
- A lot of lawyers don't know how to follow up in a way that feels comfortable. They worry about being too pesky or "salesy."

A Study in Follow-Up

To illustrate how you might do it, here are some examples of natural and effective follow-up activities that could be employed with prospective clients who attended a seminar at which you spoke.

1. **Prioritize the attendee list.** (Note: This means you need to negotiate in advance to receive the list.) Everyone who attends does not deserve the same follow-up attention. Separate out the individuals who make the best targets based on the size of the company, their titles, the likelihood of needing your services, the industry or whatever else makes sense for you and your practice.
2. **Look for existing relationships.** Does the list include people who could facilitate a personal follow-up? Review your colleagues' contacts or look at the targets' LinkedIn networks for people you know in common.
3. **Offer something of value.** Offer targets something that relates to the seminar topic, such as reviewing a related document free of charge, forwarding a copy of a case you referenced in your presentation or sending a template form or checklist.

4. **Contact them personally.** Reach out with an offer to stay in touch on issues related to the subject matter. For example, “We have periodic alerts on this topic; if you’re interested, I will add you to the list.”
5. **Create a value-added item with which to follow up.** For example, it could be a summary of the questions that you received after the presentation (and your answers) or a one-page summary of highlights from your speech (e.g., the “Top 10 Dos and Don’ts”).
6. **Connect on LinkedIn with personal notes.** You can start with a quick “It was great to meet you at [name of the event].”
7. **Stay in touch over time.** Code the top targets in Outlook or your firm’s CRM system and stay in touch as developments in the subject area arise. For example, “A few months ago, you attended a seminar in which I discussed XYZ topic. I thought you might be interested in the case below, which … .”
8. **Set up alerts.** Create Google or other alerts for the targeted individuals and companies or follow them on Twitter to stay apprised of developments that may present natural opportunities for follow-up.

The Value of Staying in Touch

Remember, by signing up to attend your presentation, people are indicating their interest in the subject area and in you as a subject-matter expert. In marketing lingo, we call this “permission marketing” — they have opted in to receive information on a particular issue and you have permission to give them that information.

By staying in touch and providing ongoing value, you will become a trusted advisor in an area that’s important to them.

Sally J. Schmidt *is President of Schmidt Marketing, Inc., which offers marketing services to law firms. Sally was a founder and the first President of the Legal Marketing Association. She is a Fellow of the College of Law Practice Management and was one of the first inductees into the LMA's Hall of Fame. She is the author of "Marketing the Law Firm: Business Development Techniques" and "Business Development for Lawyers: Strategies for Getting and Keeping Clients." Sally writes Attorney at Work's "Play to Win" column. Follow her on Twitter @SallySchmidt.*