Top Ten Marketing Tips for Contract and Solo Lawyers

By Katie Moesche

OWLS Freelance Lawyer Discussion Group
September 21, 2018

1. Schedule Marketing Time. The most successful marketers are those who make it a regular part of their everyday lives. Schedule time on your calendar to help accomplish this. Set aside one or two hours a week to take a client or referral source to lunch, write an article, attend a bar, community or industry event, update your bio, connect with people on LinkedIn, or post things online.

2. Get Out of Your Office. Effective marketing requires personal interaction. A lot of work these days is done through email or over the phone, and attorneys don't take advantage of opportunities to meet clients, prospects or referral sources in person. There simply is no substitute for face-to-face contact as it builds trust and instantly strengthens relationships, so hand deliver documents to clients when possible, ask to tour your clients' facilities, and attend events your clients and potential clients attend.

Bonus tip: *Have a plan before attending events. If you want to touch base with someone you know will be attending, plan to go to the event together or meet up at or after the event. If your goal is to see who all is attending and meet specific attendees, hang out by the registration table so you know when they arrive. If your objective is to meet as many people as possible, stand by the bar or just inside the door and serve as an unofficial greeter.*

3. Network Everywhere. Opportunities to meet people and market yourself are everywhere: bar, charity, community and industry events, neighborhood association meetings, your children's school and sporting events, book clubs, cooking classes… Network to find out what other people do for a living and let them know what you do. The goal is for you to be the first call when someone needs an attorney. Even if you are unable to help because you don't practice in a particular area, you can make a referral to another attorney and establish referral networks.

Bonus tip: *Most attorneys do a good job of keeping in touch with their law school classmates, but don't forget about your college classmates because they may be working for companies that have a need for contract attorneys or solo attorneys with specific skills.*

4. Get Actively Involved. Joining a bar, community, or industry association is not enough to make an impact. To justify the time and get the most bang for your buck, become actively involved by serving on a committee and/or seeking leadership positions. Get involved with associations that interest you so you will be more likely to attend and actively participate. The membership committee is a great choice for involvement because you get to meet everyone when they are new and have the opportunity to get to know them from the outset, which makes attending social events much easier.

Bonus tip: *To gauge the value of an association before joining, contact the association and ask if you can attend an event for free, or attend a couple of events and pay the non-member fee, which is only slightly higher than the member rate.*

5. Be Known for Something. As a solo practitioner or contract attorney it can be tempting to be all things to all people, but this makes it difficult to market yourself and for others to refer work to you. When you market to everyone, you market to no-one. Cultivate a niche or area of expertise (practice area, industry focus, geographic area) and distinguish yourself. Select something that interests you and keep up on the laws and regulations: elder law, immigration, autonomous vehicles. And think of things firms can't do economically or won't do, such as employee handbook reviews. You can practice broadly, but should market narrowly – and market for the type of work and clients you want.

6. Spend Significant Time on Your Bio and LinkedIn Profile. Attorney bios are often the major determination in hiring an attorney. This is why it's important to review and update your bio and/or LinkedIn profile (and other online profiles) on a regular basis and make sure they showcase the benefits you provide and are targeted to your ideal client.

- Include special skills (languages, certifications)
- Include areas of focus: practice area, industry, geographic
- Include types of clients and cases as they are helpful to gauge your level of experience and can be what persuades a client to hire you
- Use key words, but don't overdo it
- Make sure your photo is updated and professional

Bonus tip: *If you are specifically looking for contract work, include "Contract Attorney – Area of Focus" (Contract Attorney – Labor and Employment Law) in your LinkedIn headline to help recruiters locate you, and follow law firms and companies on LinkedIn that use contract attorneys.*

7. Track and Thank Referrals. If you aren't tracking in-coming referrals, start! It can be as simple as keeping track of referrals on an Excel spreadsheet or a Word document. Determining where your work is coming from will allow you to focus your resources (time and money) and engage in activities that have succeeded in the past. If you don't want or can't take a new matter or assignment, refer it to another solo or contract attorney and build a referral network. Maybe even start a networking club. And be sure and thank everyone who refers business to you, preferably with a written thank you note.

Bonus tip: *It's also a good idea to track the industry and geographic area of your clients, and work you are referring out to other attorneys to see if you have a potential niche you can expand or a potential new service offering.*

8. Take Advantage of Inexpensive Marketing Opportunities. There are several free and economical ways to increase your visibility, showcase your capabilities, and meet prospective clients and referral sources:

a. **Write articles** – Bar sections, industry groups, and community newspapers often seek quality writers for newsletters and online publications. This activity takes time, but is a free resource to elevate your profile and highlight your expertise on a particular topic. Leverage your work and increase your exposure by submitting your article to other groups who may be interested in the topic and post a link to the articles on your website, LinkedIn profile, and other social media.

b. **Speak at events** – Bar sections and industry groups are always looking for quality speakers for monthly meetings, seminars, and annual conferences. This is another activity that requires a time commitment, but is a great platform to raise your visibility, emphasize your knowledge, and get all important face time with a targeted group. And you can often attend events for free or at a discount and can take advantage of networking opportunities.

Bonus tip: *Gain added exposure by posting your speaking engagements on your LinkedIn profile and tweeting about the event.*

c. **Utilize free PR** – There are many online resources (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook) with opportunities for free public relations.

i. Post noteworthy items (summary of a new law, interesting cases to follow, articles, speeches) to your LinkedIn profile and your message will go to your entire network.

ii. Submit newsworthy items (committee or board appointments, awards, office move) to *Multnomah Lawyer* Around the Bar and *Oregon State Bar Bulletin* Among Us to raise your visibility with the local bar associations.

Bonus tip: *Always submit a headshot because photos get noticed and will help people remember you.*

iii. Send newsworthy items to trade associations, school alumni publications (college and law school), and community newspapers.

Bonus tip: *Several local communities have area newspapers (see Pamplin Media Group) which are an excellent way to expand visibility with your neighbors and neighborhood businesses.*

iv. Comment on listservs and social media posts to highlight your legal knowledge and be seen as an expert. Caveat: Comment only on subjects you know well and present yourself professionally as if writing to a client or referral source.

v. Introduce yourself to local beat writers and offer to serve as a resource on specific topics in which you have specialized knowledge.

d. **Be a table guest** – Many law firms purchase sponsorship tables for bar and community events and have trouble filling them (and probably some of your referral sources and clients do as well) so let them know you would be interested in attending events should they need to fill a table. It can be short notice, but it's always appreciated and can lead to some unexpected marketing opportunities.

9. Identify and Communicate Your Value. Determine how you provide value to your clients (efficiency, industry knowledge, technical skills, problem solving ability, business acumen, professional contacts, flexibility, etc.) and communicate it in writing (on your bio and online profiles) and orally (elevator speech). Have a pitch ready that conveys the benefits you provide and articulates your message because it's an effective way to market yourself so people remember you.

Bonus tip: *Let clients, firms and companies know how you can help them and make it easy for them to hire you: be accessible and responsive, be flexible with rates and hours, let them know if you can work from home so there is no overhead, remind them if you know their software, processes, people, etc.*

10. Focus on Helping Others. Continuously look for opportunities to genuinely help others: your clients, colleagues, potential clients, and referral sources. It is through helping others, both professionally and personally, that quality relationships are formed – and this is the backbone of successful marketing.

Tips for Contract Attorneys From a Large Firm Recruiter:

- Try and work with one firm as much as possible, or at least on the same side (plaintiff or defense) to limit potential conflicts
- Network within the legal community because we would rather hire a known quantity than to go with an unknown attorney from an agency
- Don't send unsolicited emails or resumes unless you have a referral, and it's best to have the referral send on your resume
- Let the firm know you enjoyed the assignment and are available for future assignments, and also what else you can do because we keep a list of contract attorneys

Contact Information:

Katie Moesche
Assistant Business Development Manager
Stoel Rives LLP
503.294-9603
katie.moesche@stoel.com

Turning Your Bio Into a Magnet for Business

By Larry Bodine

Smart lawyers turn their bios into a marketing magnet that generates leads, as opposed to a mere resume or a CV, which recites only your education and experience. The trick is to turn a feature of yourself into a benefit to the client. In other words, if you've completed a particular activity, you need to answer the question, "So what?" If a client knows you've done something, how does that benefit him or her?

A "feature" is what something has, like a car with four doors or a new improved formula. A "benefit" is what it does for clients: "This car has four doors to accommodate growing families."

Here's how to tell the difference: When you hear a product claim, ask the question, "So what does that do for me?" If there is no answer to that question, you just heard a feature. If there is an answer, you just heard a benefit. For example, consider a hardware-store drill. You look on the box and it tells you the volts and amps and RPMs, but what you're really buying is a hole. If you're buying lipstick, it can have a fancy formula, but what women are buying is something that makes them feel attractive. And so forth.

Benefits Bring New Business

This analysis applies directly to lawyer bios. Benefits are what will generate leads for you; they are going to turn your bio into something that's going to make people call you. If you're trying to reach businesses that want to retain you for legal services, they are looking for business benefits. They want to:

- Make more money;
- Keep more money;
- Save time;
- Cut costs;
- Reduce risk; and
- Importantly, they want you to make them look good.

If a CEO client has a troublesome issue that he must present to the Board of Directors, you can work with him to put a good spin on it; you've just saved the CEO's job and made him look good. Or, if it's litigation and you're working with the CEO, you want the company to look good to the shareholders. Those are the sort of benefits that clients are looking for.

If you look at a lot of attorneys' bios, you'll find few there are not a lot of distinctions or differences between them. Many partner bios begin with *"Mr. Jones is a senior shareholder and is chair of the firm's corporate practice group. He has 25 years' experience."* So what? These are features.

Let's revise it to say:

Mr. Jones is a senior shareholder in the firm's corporate practice, and can counsel you through your corporate transactions with the confidence and expertise clients seek. With more than 25 years of real-world experience, he knows how to bring many time- and money-saving solutions to your business problems.

Let's look at some of the changes. I kept in "senior shareholder" and "corporate practice" but the "so what?" is that he can "counsel you through your real estate and corporate transactions with the confidence and expertise clients seek." So I extended the feature into having a benefit from the client's perspective. And what does having "more than 25 years of experience" mean for the client? "He knows how to bring many time- and money-saving solutions to your business problems."

What lawyers need to do is to provide proof points when they make an assertion in a bio. They must have some evidence or examples of what the assertion means for the client.

Common Features in Bios

Another common feature that appears in lawyer bios is the fact that they lecture or speak on particular issues. What might be a potential benefit?

- It shows you're up to speed in the latest trends and news.
- It shows people want to hear what you have to say.
- It makes it sound as if you are frequently in front of people like your client, so you're up to speed with their business.

However, your bio must expressly spell out these benefits.

Another feature that shows up on a lot of lawyer bios is "He has testified before the State Legislature, and has assisted legislators and their staff in drafting laws." If I were a client that was affected by this legislation, what would be the benefit to me of the capability you have identified?

It shows you may have some influence and credibility. It demonstrates that you know how those laws are interpreted and executed. It may show that you have helped the Legislature pass certain bills into law. Again, it's taking a capability and turning it into something that matters to the client.

Some features have no benefits for clients, like she has "been an active member of the County Bar Association where he has served on the Bar Council." Clients expect you to belong to a bar association. They have no idea what the bar council is. The only benefit that I can see is to other lawyers who may send you a referral. However, for clients I would add "and many other lawyers refer their cases to this person, who is considered a 'lawyer's lawyer.'"

continued on page 4

Larry Bodine, Esq., a member of this newsletter's Board of Editors is a business development adviser based in Glen Ellyn, IL. With the Apollo Business Development Program (http://www.apollobusiness-development.com), he has helped law firms nationwide. He can be reached at 630.942.0977 and www.larrybodine.com.

Practice Building Skills

continued from page 3

A PERSONAL BRAND

Lawyers need to start to think about themselves as a personal brand. Ask yourself, "What do I want to be known for in the business community for the next year?" That's what should be translated into your bio and into activities you do to market yourself. What is it you would want to be known as if you were a product? Are you a Mercedes or a Hyundai? You may have a great resume, but it will just list all the places that you worked. But when you go into practice, your bio should answer. "What have you done for people? What have you accomplished? How have you helped people? Can you give me some examples? Tell me the names of people that you've worked for?" A bio is completely different from a resume. It really requires a mental shift.

ELEMENTS TO ADD TO YOUR BIO

The general rule is that if there's something you're going to promote over the next year, it should be in your bio. Describe what you've done for businesses in your target industries, such as, "He helped put together a multi-family project for a large landowner."

If a client were searching your bio, the first thing he would ask is: "Do you work with people in the same circumstances that I am in?" So include the industries you've served and what you have done for them. And in the description of your representative transactions, be sure to include the results that you produced.

Remember — your bio needs to start out with a bang. Something like, "I help X people get what they want." What you're trying to achieve is like the lead paragraph of a newspaper article. The first sentence just has to jump off the page and grab readers. So as you examine your bio, identify everything that you think is a feature. The results of your past experience would be the benefits. Put in things that could be a conversation starter.

Also consider adding your avocations to personalize your bio. If you are an avid golfer or if you like to run in marathons, someone else may read it and say "Oh, I'm interested in that too!" For instance, in Chicago I am on the board of the Theodore Roosevelt Association, and it's an interesting collection of historians, lawyers, academics, writers and authors. That would be the sort of information that I would include in my bio, because it would illustrate:

- I am interested in history.
- I read.
- I am an admirer of a particular historical figure.
- I am on the board of the organization.

GETTING FOUND IN GOOGLE

Your goal is to turn your bio into something that generates leads for you. You want your bio make people contact you for new business, and one aspect of that is getting found in Google.

Typically, the way general counsel pick a lawyers is they'll call up other general counsel and ask, "Whom do you recommend?" The next thing they are going to do is go online. You should load your bio with key words that are going attract somebody who is going to be searching for someone like you. The idea is to use the words that an executive at a Google screen is going to type to find you. If you want to attract mergers, acquisitions, securities work and technology companies, use those words in your bio. The same thing works for a geographic area. If you want to attract clients in Europe, use the word "Europe" a lot. And the same thing applies to the kind of clients you work with. If you work with CEOs, boards of directors and special committees, use those terms.

I also want to call your attention to the power of testimonials. Remember, it is always much more impressive if someone else says something good about you instead of you saying "I'm the ultimate expert." I found some great testimonials on the Web site of Pillsbury & Levinson at http://www.pillsburylevinson.com/CM/Custom/Client-Testimonials.asp.

CONCLUSION

It all starts with a good bio, so that you can indeed get more business, attract more work, and make more money.

—❖—

Media & Comm. Corner

continued from page 2

check for updates on pages of sites that do not provide their content in syndicate-able format, which includes most law firms' Web sites.

Simplify your efforts by creating smart folders that will search for news by specified criteria and keep it organized for you. You can then use the WYSIWYG editor to turn the information around perhaps in the form of a direct post to your blog or an e-mail to your clients, colleagues, or network.

TWEET REPEATS

Twitter is one of the hottest communication sites because it allows you to tap into myriad conversations and follow news that you might otherwise miss. But the sheer volume of Twitter posts (called "tweets") can quickly overwhelm even the most dedicated followers. Again, turn to tools to help. Tweetdeck http://www.tweetdeck.com beta is invaluable for managing Twitter feeds. By organizing your contacts into groups, you can quickly determine what's important as you keep an eye on top trends and build your network. Consider a three-pronged organizational approach: Set up one group for people you regularly converse with, another for people you're just getting to know, and one more for influencers you'd like to know better.

Suggest to your colleagues that they link up with coTweet https://CoTweet.com, which allows several people at the same firm to manage their Twitter business accounts together. CoTweet allows people to communicate through Twitter accounts and

continued on page 12