

Constant Contact

Four strategies for cultivating clients.

BY **MARTHA M. NEWMAN**

Attracting new clients to your law firm does not have to be a burden on your budget or deprive you of an inordinate amount of billable time. Here are four strategies for winning clients without expensive outlays of marketing dollars.

Cast Your Nets Where the Best Fish Swim. Join trade and professional associations in which your ideal clients are active, and work side-by-side with them on committees and projects. Start building your visibility and credibility in those organizations.

- *Research.* Get organization recommendations from your clients and referral sources and join the ones most advantageous for you.
- *Increase visibility.* Attend events regularly and network before they begin. Volunteer for jobs that give you face time with members.
- *Offer your expertise.* Make use of your speaking skills and ask to deliver a lunch presentation. Periodically write articles for the organizations' newsletters that discuss current legal issues affecting their members' businesses.

Ping Your Prospects Regularly. Never let follow-up with prospects fall off your calendar. From the moment you meet potential clients and referral sources, go back to the office and log their names as recurring appointments on your calendar for follow-up one to three months out or whatever seems appropriate.

Create a spreadsheet containing the names of prospects along with their contact information, relevant personal and professional details, and space for recording the date and description of each follow-up. This, along with the recurring alerts for prospects you have entered in your calendar, will bring accountability to your business devel-

opment efforts.

You must maintain your visibility and bring value to each business development encounter. It takes about seven "pings" (or moments of contact) with major prospects to cultivate the relationship enough to ask for business or referrals. Prospects must know you, like you, and trust you.

Pings do not have to involve lunch! Here are some examples:

- Offer to introduce prospects to others who can provide them business value.
- Invite prospects to attend an event where you will be speaking.
- Ask for advice in their areas of expertise.
- Give them advice generously when sought.
- Endorse your prospects' skills on LinkedIn.
- Send links to news articles that are of interest to their businesses.
- Enlist the help of prospects to assist you with some worthy goal, such as attending a charity fundraising lunch.
- Invite them to speak at events whose attendees would be good contacts for their own businesses.
- Offer free training or CLEs at the prospects' offices.

Make LinkedIn Work for You. One of the perks of using LinkedIn is being able to share your expertise with your target audience and establish yourself as an authoritative leader in your field. This is known as thought leadership and can be accomplished in many ways. Set an appointment on your calendar allocating 15 minutes a day to focus on building your LinkedIn presence.

- *Earn all-star status.* Complete all the sections of your profile to outperform your competitors' pages and present a more comprehensive picture of your capabilities.

Use the profile strength meter on the right side of your screen to find out how to improve.

- *Join groups.* Focus on participating in groups of 50 or more members that include your ideal clients and referral sources, and contribute regularly to their conversation threads.
- *Post informative content.* To build your reputation as a thought leader, write regular posts in your updates section and publish them to all your groups.
- *Start blogging.* Write short 200-400 word posts on your blog. Share the link with a short introduction as a post to your LinkedIn groups.

Discover Your Brand. Chances are, your brand already exists in your clients' minds. Ask yourself the following questions to guide you in realizing and reinforcing your brand:

- What adjectives likely pop into clients' minds when they think of me?
- How am I *different* from my competition in ways that make me the best choice for prospective clients?
- How can I establish a significant and differentiated presence in the legal market?

You can also poll your existing clients to get their insights on how they would best describe you as a lawyer and what they most value about your services. Use the responses as a guide in describing your brand on your website, blog, LinkedIn profile, and all digital communications.

Using these strategies costs you nothing except time—and those minutes and hours spent marketing will pay off as you succeed in building a lucrative book of business. **TBJ**



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