



## The Marketing Assistant: What Do Great Marketers Know That You Don't?

By: Mark Powers & Shawn McNalis, Atticus, Inc.



As marketing advisors and coaches, one question we constantly grapple with is this: how can *good lawyers* become *great marketers*? Driven to distraction by constant interruptions, difficult staffing issues and demanding clients, most attorneys don't take the time -- to do what it takes.

Yet, many of our attorney clients are very good at marketing when placed in the right situations. It's getting them there that's the problem. Making phone calls with contacts often involves a lot of phone tag, calendaring client development events takes time, planning the basic logistics of marketing is distracting. As a rule, attorneys aren't very good at the *initiation* phase of marketing.

At Atticus, we believe this phase is essential – without someone to initiate and organize these steps, most marketing efforts will never get off the ground.

“If you aren't successful in setting up lunches, dinners and meetings with referral sources, your client development efforts aren't going to be very strategic,” Shawn McNalis, one of our practice advisors, says. “If you're not meeting with the right people, then you're relying on nothing more than happenstance to promote your practice. Happenstance will take you only so far. We advise our clients to take a more proactive approach.”

Large firms can rely upon marketing directors to deal with client development. But what does the small firm practitioner do?

Enter the Marketing Assistant. When Atticus' client Mark Chinn, an attorney from Jackson, MS, had difficulty marketing himself, he sought change. That change came to him in the form of a young college student, studying marketing at a local junior college.

For a number of months Chinn had been listening to me

promote the idea of leveraging himself by hiring a marketing assistant. Though his new assistant had little experience, Chinn immediately noticed the difference hiring a marketing assistant made to his practice. Every morning, armed with a list of contacts, she and Chinn would have a short meeting to strategize, set up lunches and plan client development events. They also focused on placing articles about his firm in both local and statewide newspapers.

To accomplish this last task, they compiled a list of publications and set up the list as an e-mail group in their database system. Consequently, whenever something newsworthy happened in Chinn's office – a new promotion, a new award – his marketing assistant could automatically distribute the news to the state or local press.

“She was so ambitious and proficient. Any assignment I gave her came back to me ten fold,” Chinn explained.

Rick Law, an estate-planning attorney in Aurora, Illinois, also found it time consuming to market his practice to prospective referral sources. To overcome this obstacle, he hired a marketing assistant, Jonathan Johnson, who instantly impressed Law with his initiative and drive. Formerly a manager at a title-insurance company, Johnson used his background in sales to assist Law in his marketing efforts.

Since hiring Johnson, Law's marketing efforts have been revitalized. “Attorneys can tend to be a little...prickly or porcupiny in our attitudes,” Law admits. “With my marketing assistant, there was a complete lack of that. It was very refreshing to me to see this outsider help implement some of my ideas, but also bring fresh new ideas for marketing my practice.”

Recently, inspired by one of the other Atticus Rainmaker participants, Johnson created an event for Rick Law's top referral sources. Similar to a Spanish tapas dinner the

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evening's menu featured many small dishes instead of one main course. "It was different, but the idea was received quite well. We limited it to our top referral sources, which fit perfectly with our clientele – mostly caregivers and nursing home professionals. Without my marketing assistant, this event would never have gotten off the ground," Law said.

To leverage your marketing efforts by working with a marketing assistant, consider delegating a number of different client development activities:

- Schedule lunch/breakfast marketing meetings
- Manage your database of clients and referral sources
- Plan and manage parties, seminars and other group events
- Build and manage TOMA program – newsletter, email, birthday list
- Assist in preparation for speaking engagements
- Prompt you to write thank you notes
- Deliver gifts and buy tickets for your referral sources
- Prompt you into action when you stop marketing

There are several different ways for small firms to employ a marketing assistant. For \$8 to \$15 per hour, depending on your location, you can hire someone to work for you part time, such as Mark Chinn's college student. If you require more support, hire someone full-time, as Rick Law did, or draft one of your existing staff members to help.

This last option is the most popular among my clients, but I'm particularly fond of contracting with *virtual* marketing assistants. Consider this option if you have limited office space or are not interested in hiring another employee. Since virtual marketing assistants work from their homes or remote office locations, a law firm doesn't have to free up office space or include them on the payroll. The firm can specify how much time they need on a weekly, monthly, or per project basis. Virtual marketing assistants are paid \$30 - \$45 per hour, depending on their qualifications. I currently work with several virtual assistants who

will work as little as 10 hours, or upwards of 80 hours per month, depending on my need for their services.

No matter how you set it up, this is an idea that works. We have identified the 21 most important Marketing Assets that a rainmaker must acquire to be successful, and I rate having a marketing assistant third overall in effectiveness.

In the words of Rick Law, "If you work with your marketing assistant to plan two or three marketing contacts a week, by the end of a year you'll have made a hundred to a hundred and fifty marketing contacts. If that many marketing contacts a year won't stimulate new business, nothing will!" I couldn't agree more. If you are too busy to initiate client development activities, don't despair – delegate.

About the Authors:

*Mark Powers, President of Atticus, Inc., and Shawn McNalis co-authored How Good Attorneys Become Great Rainmakers and Time Management for Attorneys, and are featured marketing writers for Lawyers, USA and a number of other publications. To learn more about the work that Atticus ([www.atticusonline.com](http://www.atticusonline.com)) does with attorneys or the Atticus Rainmakers™*