



Rainmaking: Word of Mouth Marketing

By: Mark Powers and Shawn McNalis



With the exception of legal skills and managing your time well, the most important skill in assuring your success is the ability to attract good paying clients. Without good (translate: profitable) clients coming through the door on a regular basis, your law practice cannot survive.

Over the next few months, I will introduce you to a step by-step process for increasing your client base. The techniques discussed are practical and have been time tested in the real world. When you see a tip that you like – try it on! I also recommend the suggested exercises at the end of each lesson and, if you work them throughout the series, you will see the real benefits. Most of the suggested exercises are brief. In order to complete them, block out time on your calendar – then honor that appointment with yourself.

Rainmaking Lesson One

If you review the key elements involved in word-of-mouth marketing, it will come as no surprise that most of the elements involve communication and building relationships. And quite honestly, these are areas where most attorneys excel. “Word-of-mouth marketing” means just that – get the word out about you and your practice to others. Successful marketing often comes down to knowing Who To Talk To, What To Say, and How and When To Say It. Many attorneys fail to market themselves because they miss one of these steps.

Word-of-Mouth Marketing Process



To start, focus first on the Who To Talk To. Think about your practice for a minute – who do you need to talk to in order to generate more business? Your clients? Your friends? Your business associates? Not knowing the answer to this question has stopped many attorneys from successfully marketing themselves, yet it is not hard to answer.

It all begins with a profile of your clients. Until you truly know the clientele you serve, you won’t know who influences them to do business with you. If, for example, you are an estate-planning attorney, you may prefer to work with high net worth individuals who own their own businesses. These individuals typically have a strong relationship with their CPA, their financial advisor and their investment broker. If you happen to have a good relationship with one of these professionals, they would be in a position to recommend your services. They would be a referral source, or an influencer, because of their ability to influence clients to use your services.

Who Is Your Ideal Client?

If you understand the profile, otherwise known as the demographics, of your ideal clients, you can work backward, as just demonstrated, to determine who influences them. It is important to note that you will have a different primary client or “target market” for each of your practice areas. In addition, some attorneys, real estate attorneys for example, may have institutional clients that send them work – such as banks. If this is the case, consider the characteristics of the target institutions, as well as the characteristics of the decision-maker inside the institution.

But let’s take this one step further. When you start examining the characteristics of your clientele, you will begin to notice that not all clients are equally desirable. Some pay their bills promptly while some don’t pay at all. Some clients respect your advice and even recommend you to others, while others are uncooperative and require an extraordinary level of maintenance.

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Think about it. Don't you have both good clients and "problem clients"? This occurs in all practice areas and the inability to distinguish between the two carries with it a high, hidden cost, but more about that later. As an important part of your personal marketing program, you must sharpen your ability to identify the "good" clients. To help you do that, complete the actions outlined in "The First Step" below.

Don't be deceived by how simple this exercise looks – the profiles of the individuals and institutions that you serve are the foundation of your word-of-mouth campaign.

"Word-of-mouth marketing will produce the highest quality client."

The First Step

1. Make a list of all your current clients. Rank them with an "A," "B," "C" or "D" rating.
2. Use the list of attributes provided to help you identify the client characteristics for each of your practice areas.

In doing this exercise, many of Atticus' clients are surprised to discover that most of the information about their client demographics is easily retrieved from their memory. But, if you want more precision, go through your files to look at the information you have collected on your clients through the last 90 days.

Practice Area:

Client Attributes

Age or Range:

Income:

Occupation:

Value of Home:

Asset Value:

Family Size:

Size of Business:

Where They Live:

Where They Work:

Title:

Gender:

Education Level:

It is a good idea to cut out this article and this exercise and begin a rainmaking workbook for yourself. In the next issue we'll discuss how to profit by focusing on your "A" and "B" clients. Most attorneys find this an eye-opening experience – we think you will, too!

Mark Powers, President of Atticus, Inc. and Shawn McNalis, co-authored "The Making of a Rainmaker: An Ethical Approach to Marketing for Solo and Small Firm Practitioners," and are featured writers for Lawyers, USA and a number of other publications. To learn more about the work that Atticus does with attorneys or the Atticus Rainmakers™ program, please visit www.atticusonline.com or call 352-383-0490 or 888-644-0022.