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(marketing)

LEGAL MARKETING ADVICE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19



Lynn Foley
CEO, fSquared Marketing

A NOTE FROM LYNN

At the start of each year, we at fSquared Marketing assemble the [Legal Marketing Trends](#) for the coming year with the help of some of the leaders in our industry. This year we heard their predictions related to focused data, client feedback, directories submission, social media, podcasts and more.

Who would have thought, as they wrote their contributions, that less than three months into the year we would find ourselves, and our businesses, dealing with COVID-19?

With that in mind, we reached out to some of our contributors to share their advice to law firms and our legal marketing colleagues during these difficult times. They generously obliged.

ADVICE TO CLIENTS

Personally, the number one piece of advice I'm giving my clients right now is to simply figure out how to help your clients make it through this time. What that may look like to each unique client may differ so taking the time to personalize your client service offering will take a little extra thought. To one client it may mean something straightforward like providing advice on employment or contract law issues, while another may simply require a phone call to let them know you're there if you need them. Everyone is receiving daily e-mail from their law firms with links to resources they may need. To stand out from the crowd, show that you've put some thought into your personal communication and offer something of true value even if it's just a friendly ear. When we arrive at our "new normal" it will be those that were there for their clients who will be by their side as they move forward.

ADVICE TO COLLEAGUES

And to my legal marketing colleagues, I offer this advice. Be flexible. Be creative. The world in which we live and work has been turned on its head and we need to be flexible and creative in the performance of our roles. If your firm has cut the marketing budget come up with a list of activities that only require your time and effort. If your lawyers have decided to pull back on marketing activities move into a client service role helping lead the client outreach efforts I recommend above. You have experience and expertise to add during these difficult times – figure what that is and you'll be invaluable.

Stay healthy!



The top marketing/BD related advice you are giving your law firm or attorneys at this time.

I've been overusing the phrase: "Add to the signal. Not to the noise." We will lose the race against time to be first in inboxes with the latest VERY IMPORTANT MUST-SEE NOW alert. We aren't running a newspaper here. PAUSE. Take a breath. Practice leaders, heaven forbid, collaborate with each other. Craft something with insight, perspective, unique voice. Yes, it still needs to get to your clients—and prospective clients (don't forget those!)—in a timely fashion but let everyone else send the facts-only (boring, unread) news items. Clients are only going to skim those. Make them look forward to YOURS. And stop being so singularly reliant on email. Leverage social media, traditional PR/media, phone calls (gasp!) to break through. It always amuses me how many eblasts on the same exact topic are forwarded to me internally. "ALL the other firms are doing THIS," they seem to chastise. "So WHY then would WE want to?" I drily respond. Be smart. Stand out.



*Roy Sexton
Director of Marketing,
Clark Hill*

The top thing you would advise your legal marketing colleagues to do at this time.

Make yourself indispensable. I've been through the implosion of organizations in the past. I worked in healthcare for over a decade for goodness' sake! The best compliment I received from the managing partner of my first law firm was "you really know how to make yourself indispensable." See a task or a need? Take it on. At my first firm, I worked in real estate negotiations. Took on HR roles. Managed client audit visits. And generally did what needed to be done in crisis. Don't turn up your nose at any opportunity. Be collaborative, not needlessly competitive. Be open. Pay attention to the urgent needs developing around you, marketing or no, and roll up your sleeves and help. Now is not the time to be defensive or to protect your turf. Devise solutions for growth. Share numbers. Expand reach. Celebrate others. Get the name of your firm out there in positive ways. Take the higher ground. Always.



The top marketing/BD related advice you are giving law firm clients at this time.

You must focus on client service like never before. All clients are fearful of an uncertain future; talk to each regularly and carefully listen to their issues and work to help resolve them.

It is not the time for business development unless your firm has particular experience in resolving issues created by COVID-19.

The top thing you would advise your legal marketing colleagues to do at this time.

Be seen as an essential service to your firm's leadership. Law firms are like any other business; everyone is looking at their burn rate—the amount of cash on hand and how long it will last. Tough decisions will be made about the resources needed to stay in business. Be the trusted advisor who comes up with new ideas to solve pressing issues.



Pamela Foster
Principal, Pamela Powered Inc.

The top marketing/BD related advice you are giving law firm clients at this time.

Many firms are turning to their leadership, business executives and leaders and asking, “What should we do?” in response to sudden economic, health, and emotional crisis that has affected all of us. There was a time for a flurry of alerts, updates, and articles about what all of your clients should be doing. Eventually, we must work with speed, agility, and quickness to take care of and focus on our most important relationships with key clients, internal audiences, and business influencers. In short, you must PROTECT THE CORE.

In times that are rapidly changing, the instinct for many people is to try anything to re-establish a sense of control. However, random activity and attempts to remain busy often creates even more chaos and unproductive stress. Many marketing and business development professionals right now report being busier than they have ever been, but are they and their lawyers focusing on the things that really matter? I have long advised law firms that every lawyer has just 15 people that will make or break their year. This collection of five clients, five prospects, and five influencers (5-5-5) is far more important than the infinite list of possibilities that tend to bring on analysis paralysis. In our current situation, this principle of extreme focus is even more important.

Leadership and business executives should work with each lawyer to identify the following 5-5-5 list with a modification to identify internal colleagues instead of new client acquisition. There will be a time for prospecting in the next 3-6 months, but it should have a decreased level of investment than usual. Each lawyer should have a list of the specific names of the people in the following categories:

1. Five clients: who are the most important to your practice in terms of revenue, volume, and profitability?
2. Five colleagues: which lawyers, business development experts, and other executives help you proactively serve your five clients?
3. Five influencers: who are the people that refer business or often work with you on deal flow?

These 15 people will vary for many lawyers, but there may be significant overlap. This will naturally create opportunities for collaboration that will simultaneously benefit the lawyer, firm, and client. By increasing their discipline and intensity on a smaller target, they will worry less about their large Circle of Concern (everything in the world we can do nothing about) and more on their tighter Circle of Influence (the things we have some control over).

The top thing you would advise your legal marketing colleagues to do at this time.

For all of these core categories (clients, colleagues, influencers), legal marketers need to know what their business is experiencing. Legal marketers should work with their firm's lawyers to understand how their key contacts' employment, supply, financial, regulatory, and multiple other systems are being affected.

Legal marketers should also endeavor to understand how these contacts are **PERSONALLY** being affected regarding their family, profession, and emotional state. No one can do this for thousands of people, and an email blast is not a source of comfort. An empathetic conversation over the phone or the other side of a Zoom call can be. That requires thinking about that core group of people who have helped get you, your lawyers, and firm to where you are today.

When faced with untenable alternatives, you should consider your imperatives: focus on your most important relationships, help your people collaborate, and be proactive in solving the challenges of both. This is the essence of protecting the core. One of my favorite pieces of advice I was given was "Stick to what you know until something better turns up." It is a simple plan, but not so simple to do. So, don't work too hard trying to overcomplicate it.



Darryl Cross
Practice Group Leader, Intapp

The top marketing/BD related advice you are giving your law firm or attorneys at this time.

While we may be in the midst of a pandemic that is raising novel and challenging issues for clients, the rules of relationships haven't changed even if the rules of engagement have. Communication is key – be it via digital platforms with virtual meetings and webinars, via email or even using the tried and true old school phone call. Lawyers should be reaching out to their clients regularly, checking in on how they can help, how their clients are faring personally and professionally and offering a sounding board for issues of all sorts. Nothing substitutes for personal outreach.

The top thing you would advise your legal marketing colleagues to do at this time.

Leverage the agility that you have developed over the years in the multifaceted roles that many of us have held to provide broad strategic advice to lawyers and to look forward to what the next three, six and 12 months hold for clients so you can strategically guide your lawyers and position your firm to address longer-term economic and industry trends impacting your clients.



Trish Lilley
Chief Marketing and Business Development Officer,
STROOCK

The top marketing/BD related advice you are giving law firm clients at this time.

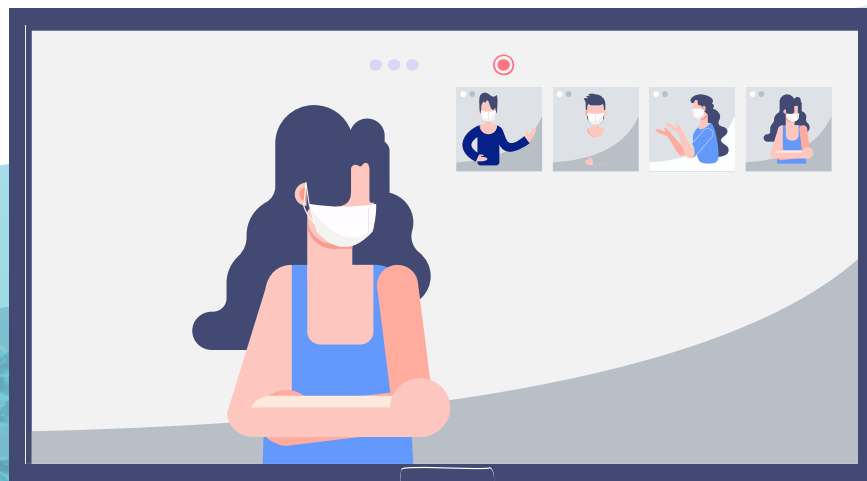
Now more than ever, it's important to listen closely to what your clients are saying. This is the time to develop and implement client listening operations to ensure that your firm is meeting client needs and helping them to address the myriad challenges that have arisen as a result of the pandemic. Create a plan for client listening through three distinct stages: emergency response (a period we are still in), early recovery (which we can see on the horizon), and recovery in an altered business landscape. Obtaining feedback and information directly from clients will be key to providing for their evolving needs and adapting your service delivery appropriately.

The top thing you would advise your legal marketing colleagues to do at this time.

Strive to become your clients' go-to source for legal information and business insights. Most law firms are producing COVID-19 related content. To stand out, your firm will need to understand clients' concerns, and what is changing in their world. A well-defined client listening program can help your firm match your communication strategy and content creation to client priorities.



Derek Jones
CEO, Acuigen



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