

Personal Relationship Building Is the Key to 2022 Marketing Initiatives

BY CAROL SCHIRO GREENWALD

It's the beginning of the year so hopefully attorneys are creating marketing and business development plans for themselves and their firms. I asked my panel what they are doing in terms of 2022 marketing.

Marketing Focus

The focus of their marketing efforts are almost evenly divided between Internet and social media activities and building relationships through networking activities.

- Annamarie Bondi-Stoddard, managing partner, Pegalis Law Group, a medical malpractice firm, focuses on the Internet “to establish a presence for the firm in general and to convey that we are a long-standing successful firm in the medical malpractice arena.”
- For Alla Roytberg, attorney/mediator/speaker in the divorce and family law firm, Roytberg Traum Law and Mediation, “Our 2022 focus is Video Presence—

on Instagram, on the Website, Facebook, etc.”

- Mark Seitelman, managing partner, Mark E. Seitelman Law Offices, a personal injury firm, says, “We have an Internet marketing company whose mission is to get us more calls from our website. They are currently updating our online marketing exposure.”

Respondents focused on relationship building use this process for prospecting, nurturing clients and referral sources and acquiring new clients.

- For Amy Goldsmith, intellectual property/cyber/privacy lawyer at Tarter Krinsky & Drogin, “The focus is on nurturing relationships with clients and referral sources.”
- Jamie Mogil, JRMogil Law, works with small business creatives. She focuses her marketing on client acquisition in her practice niche.
- Nancy Schess, workplace compliance attorney at Klein Zelman Rothermel Jacobs & Schess, says, “My focus is on connections and education, with a concentration



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in the markets or types of business professionals who typically use our services.”

Firms have similar objectives. **Andrew Peskoe**, chairman of **Golenbock Eiseman Assor Bell & Peskoe**, a full service firm, identifies two important marketing purposes. “We have multiple purposes for our marketing initiatives. Certainly, we are trying to increase awareness of our services as well as upsize our individual attorneys’ relevant networks.”

Joel Weiss, managing partner, Weiss & Arons, an intellectual property boutique, seeks to raise awareness among a select group of prospects—larger clients who file multiple patents a month. “Our most profitable business

generation is limited to a select group of sophisticated, high-volume, IP customers. We don't typically encourage people to bring the smaller clients with a 'great idea' to patent but that aren't repeat customers. We try to train our younger partners to focus on the larger customers and to maintain our current large customer base—rather than attract less profitable smaller customers."

The Most Effective Business Development Technique

Attorneys' responses are all about meeting prospects and referral sources. Some prefer techniques that showcase their personality and expertise, while others stress their focus on service.

- "I am open, honest and sincere in my wish to be of service to my clients and referral source. 'How may I help you' is often my first question after 'hello,'" says Amy Goldsmith.

- George Kontogiannis, trusts and estates partner with Tesser, Ryan & Rochman, says the best technique for anyone is grounded in understanding themselves and what they are good at. "Thus, for me, I believe I am a more personal person. I value one on one relationships and have developed my business technique in creating such relationships."

- Donna Drumm, DrummAdvocacy, is an advocate for people with physical or invisible disabilities

who need accommodations in legal proceedings. "I look for referrals from attorneys who have clients with disabilities and understand the additional service enhancement court accommodations create that deepen their client relationships and enhance their clients' performance in the courtroom."

- "Speaking on industry panels has been an effective technique" for Barry Heyman, Heyman Law, an entertainment attorney.

- "Networking, networking, networking—with speaking and writing mixed in.

- We work from the basic concept that the best business relationships grow from the best personal relationships coupled with showing (as opposed to telling) the market what we have to offer," says Nancy Schess.

- Jamie Mogil is "working on a listicle and video titled, '5 Reasons Creatives Need a Lawyer.' In reading or viewing this marketing material, potential clients learn I'm skilled and experienced as well as engaging, authentic, and trustworthy.

- Annamarie Bondi-Stoddard says, for them, "the most successful area is developing relationships with a variety of attorneys and firms as a source of repeat referral business. Having attorneys that exclusively refer medical malpractice cases to us provides a steady source of new clients."

How can you predict when someone will have an accident and need a personal injury attorney? If you can't, how do you build your business effectively? Mark Seitelman knows the next person who needs him could be anywhere, so he markets widely. "When marketing to the general public, I am the business. I am the brand. Once I leave the home, I am marketing myself. My wife and I are active in the Jewish charitable and cultural worlds. Pre-COVID-19, we would attend at least one fundraiser or social event a week. We frequently talk about our personal injury practice with "regular" people, such as cabdrivers, store clerks, etc. We usually carry and give out calendar cards and other promotional items.

"We also market to other attorneys for referrals. A relationship with another personal injury law firm can produce a fairly regular stream of new clients. Several of our attorneys market our services in their own ethnic communities."

Marketing Plans and Calendars

Marketing professionals say begin with a written plan. About half the respondents do have a written plan. "As a solo practitioner, I review my marketing efforts annually. My review is success and goal oriented," says Rona Just Gura, matrimonial attorney, Law Offices of Rona Gura.

Most of these lawyers spend two to eight hours a week on business development. Charles Eric Gordon, an investigative counsel, Law Office of Charles Eric Gordon, devotes “approximately eight hours a week to marketing which includes not only actual networking but responding to postings on LinkedIn and ilaw, etc. calling former clients and meeting with other attorneys one-on-one for meals.”

“To me, marketing has a momentum and needs to be fed every single day. Of course, marketing covers many different types of activities so the actual activity every day could vary. The activity isn’t always time intensive. Sometimes it is as simple as making a phone call, sending an email or posting on LinkedIn,” says Nancy Schess.

The Impact of the Pandemic

Of course, the main impact for everyone was the shift from in-person to virtual networking and marketing. It led to different outcomes for different firms. Several attorneys mentioned the ability to participate in more networking groups because they did not have to travel. Alla Roytberg says, “We are a lot more active in Zoom-based networking events, present a lot more CLEs and speak on many more panels than pre-COVID.”

Nancy Schess also values the geographic range of virtual meetings.

“The pandemic has actually been positive for our marketing. While we were admittedly a little apprehensive about removing in-person connecting completely, we have been pleasantly surprised. We learned that the virtual platforms have given us a new and expanded reach. While we do expect to resume our pre-pandemic style of in person connecting when we can, virtual connecting will continue to play an important role in how we market our services.”

But at the same time, as Amy Goldsmith says, “What hasn’t changed is the need to connect with each person in a meaningful way.”

- For Mark Seitelman, “When our social events came to a halt it caused us to rethink our web presence and to seek more cases/clients from the web.”

- For Jamie Mogil, “The Pandemic was an opportunity for me to learn what was or wasn’t working. I learned to invest the time and money to market and connect with potential new clients in the creative industries of design and architecture.”

- **Andrew Peskoe** is pleased that more attorneys in his firm are interested in marketing initiatives. “I have complained that getting attorneys to do meaningful marketing is harder than herding cats; it is more like trying to herd

a picture of cats. I have to say that my recent experience as chairman of my law firm has been much much better. I see great progress in general, and specifically with some of my colleagues. Perhaps it is yet another unexpected consequence of the pandemic.”

Summary

Panelists for this column uniformly agree that relationship building is the key to successful business development. While all of them have at least a LinkedIn foothold in social media, they tend toward personal marketing efforts in their market niche and with people who can refer clients to them. The pandemic forced everyone to connect virtually. Even when in-person returns, it will continue to be part of most business development plans since it enables everyone to expand their reach.

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