



Eight things you can do to kick-start your marketing



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For 14 weeks last season, I watched the short-lived law drama *Justice*, just to hear high-powered, ultra-cool, L.A. attorney, Ron Trott, (aka Victor Garber, *Alias*), say in the opening theme narration, “*As I always say. . . If you’ve got the right lawyer with you, we’ve got the greatest legal system in the world.*”

What a great tagline! It’s strong, memorable and makes it clear who the top lawyer in the pack is. To put it in legal terms, your awards, degrees, verdicts and settlements are the *evidence* that lead to the implied *verdict*: We are the best lawyers in town, and you will succeed with us by your side. After all, with the exception of a stray leather glove, who remembers anything but the verdict anyway?

Marketing is *MEANT* to set you apart from the pack. If it is not singling you out, you are wasting your time and money. Assuming you have the skills and talent needed to be an excellent attorney, and if you are ready to let the world know that you are available to assist it, then get ready to open the right side of your brain and let’s talk marketing.

• No. 1 – Know who is tolling your bell.

To grow your business you need to know who is calling you, who becomes a client, and how both groups find you. Knowing who is not calling you, is not becoming a client, and what methods are not bringing you business is just as important as knowing who is. Using simple tracking methods will give you the information.

Make a list of questions your staff can answer after speaking with potential client during the first call and at intake. You probably want to know such things as how did they find you; who was the lawyer who referred them; how many of your callers are Spanish-speaking (or another language besides English); what was the resolution of each inquiry; which sources of business are bringing you inquiries that actually turn into cases; and how long did it take your staff to respond to a potential client.

There are no magic questions; figure out what you need to know and track it. However, keep your list of questions reasonably short or you will annoy your potential clients and that’s never the point.

• No. 2 – Create measurable and realistic goals.

Though it may be an ego booster, a San Francisco Chronicle article in which you are quoted is not a goal. It may be a tactic to reach your goal, but it is not a goal. Without a game plan (i.e., marketing plan) that includes strategies and tactics, you are going to run around the field aimlessly, depending on luck for success.

First you want to set goals which are measurable and include a timeframe. Next, develop the strategies to use to reach those goals. Finally, develop the tactics to use to achieve the strategies designed to meet your goals. For example:

GOAL:

By Aug. 30, 2007, the Marketing Champion Law Firm will acquire three cases that are referred by other attorneys.

STRATEGIES:

We will utilize publicity to reach our target market.

TACTIC: We will generate one article in the *Los Angeles Daily Journal* about a particular case we handled.

We will connect with other attorneys by speaking on a panel at a Bar association seminar for face-to-face interactions.

TACTIC: We will take a different lawyer to lunch each week to introduce him/her to our firm.

Most importantly, do what is doable within the time you have to work on this project and then do it well.

• No. 3 – Create a clear and distinctive identity.

Tiffany’s robin-egg blue box, McDonald’s golden arches, Nike’s swoosh – all you have to do is see these things and you instantly recognize the company and what its brand means.

On their own, a blue box, golden arches and a swoosh are meaningless. These companies created



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meaning for these elements. By Tiffany only carrying the most elegant, distinctive jewelry and their commitment to service, they became the jewelry store for the monied. In Tiffany's 166 years of business they never, ever, compromised their product or their service. This strict adherence to their standards made them an icon which was further supported by the company's depiction in movies and books.

The image of the blue box became indelibly burned into the public's mind as standing for Tiffany, which, we all know, is the pinnacle of jewelry stores. Are Tiffany's jewels really better than the ones at Ciribelli in Monaco, Van Cleef & Arpels in Beverly Hills or Bentley & Skinner in London? Probably not, but most people in the Western world when asked to name a jewelry store will name Tiffany.

Work with a good designer to develop your graphic identity and then use it for everything you do, from memos to forms to Web site to advertisements and so on. Do not accept a cookie-cutter template, unless that is how you want to be perceived – common and ordinary.

• **No. 4 – Make marketing a group activity.**

Marketing is not a solitary activity. Whether you want to admit it or not, marketing is happening, for better or worse, with every interaction anyone in your firm has with the outside world.

Your receptionist, staff and associates are your frontline marketers. They are typically the people who have the most communication with your many audiences and have a huge amount of information they can share with you, if you would only tell them about your marketing plans and ask for their educated opinions. If they understand that their raises and benefits are tied to the firm's success, marketing will become something of value to them and you will have their hearts and minds working on the firm's behalf.

For instance, does your receptionist go home and talk about how much she hates her job or does she feel valued by and proud of the organization she works for? When she talks about the firm, does she do so in glowing terms? Does the intake staff respond promptly to "potentials" and take the time to really hear their experiences? Do your paralegals complain to court clerks about you? Do your associates get involved in community activities and professional organizations? Cases come from everywhere, and your professional reputation is being built by every interaction your people have with the outside world.

• **No. 5 – Make your Web site more than a brochure.**

Your Web site is your virtual office. Like your brick-and-mortar office, your Web site must be findable. Additionally, it must instill trust and confidence by its look and design and offer consumers the answers to *their* questions so that they take the next step and contact you.

"Findable" in Web site-speak is to be search-engine optimized, which begins with your design and how your web developer writes the code for it. Other important elements are meta tags, title tags, descriptions and keywords that are strategically utilized throughout each page. Know that search engine optimization is an ongoing project that is never "finished."

Web sites will be covered in more depth in a later column, but here are a few quick pointers: Reciprocal quality links, a term used to describe links that are as relevant to your business as yours are to the business that links back to you, are good. Buying mass links from companies selling links that may go nowhere or may link to random businesses do not work to improve your search engine optimization and can get you banned by the search engines.

Web site content needs to be constantly updated. This will make the

search engines return more frequently to index your site and encourage visitors to return more often to see what new information you've added.

• **No. 6 – Write and speak as your audience reads and listens.**

Advertising icon David Ogilvy said, "*I once used the word obsolete in a headline, only to discover that 43 percent of housewives had no idea what it meant.*" Please, talk and write for real people and as real people talk. Find out what your audiences want to know, what's important to them, what questions they have, and give them the answers they need in language they can understand. It is truly that simple.

• **No. 7 – Use pictures to convey your brand.**

Pictures really do say more than words. For your professional photographs, hire a portrait photographer who will know styling and lighting. Make sure you know what you are buying, who owns what, and how the images can be used. Unless you request otherwise, most photos today are made digitally. Talk to your graphic designer about what formats (such as jpg or tiff) and what resolutions are needed now and in the near future. Be sure the photographer understands and can deliver what you need at the agreed price – some photography "package deals" are limited and the add-ons will cost you a fortune.

The image of the firm should be reflected in photographs, and you have some decisions to make. Should the photo be just "head-and-shoulders" or do you want to show more of the person? Is the background standard (and, if so, what color) or do you want a sense of place in the shot? Create a shot list, trying to include shots for future uses.

• **No. 8 – Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.**

The rule of thumb in marketing is that just as you are getting tired of your message, your audience is just beginning to comprehend it. The usual inclination



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is to do something different, to update, to change direction. Evaluate that decision carefully. If who and what you are has not changed, and if your message is strong, stick with it.

Additionally, repetition means that you continue to utilize your logo, your colors, and the message you put out, over and over again. Tiffany does not wrap Christmas presents in red and green boxes; they stick with the blue box.

Maintain your brand, regardless if you are a Target or Tiffany law firm.

Finally, remember the words of Charles Revson, Revlon's founder and leader for five decades, "In the factory we make cosmetics; in the drugstore we sell hope." Now go sell some hope.

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