

ASK THE MARKETING EXPERTS

by Sherry Hurst

While attending the Association of Legal Administrators Annual Conference in Montreal, Canada, I was one of only 50 conference attendees that had the pleasure of being a part of the session "Ask the Marketing Experts." (Space was limited for this event.) The panel of marketing experts included:

- Sally J. Schmidt, President of Schmidt Marketing, Inc.
- Larry Bodine, Strategic Marketing Consultant
- Norm Mullock, Chief Development Officer at Redwood Analytics
- Jeff Reade, President of Cole Valley Software, Inc.
- Charles (Biff) Maddock of Altman Weil Inc.
- Phyliss Haserot, President of Practice Development Counsel, Inc.
- Iris Jones, Client Services Advisor at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP

Sally Schmidt addressed the group regarding Client Surveys. Ms. Schmidt reported that only 40% of surveyed law firms indicated they utilized client surveys. Those firms surveyed also indicated that 40-50% of survey responses are good. Some lawyers believe that their clients would rather not be bothered by this exercise. Other lawyers prefer not to know what their clients are thinking. However, Schmidt says "Any good marketer knows how valuable it is to conduct research, particularly to determine the needs and impressions of major firm clients." ("The Importance of Client Surveys — from the Client's Pointe of View." Schmidt.)

When creating a client survey, Schmidt indicated you should leave plenty of white space on the survey. Start with easy questions and progress to the more difficult. A client survey should be no more than four pages in a font that is easy to read. When forwarding the survey to a client, it should be accompanied by a letter from the lawyer that knows the client best asking them to return the completed survey. Schmidt suggested sending follow-up letters if in fact the completed surveys are not returned.

Charles Maddock addressed the group on **Branding** — or what an organization is known for. Maddock reported "A business is branded in the minds of customers if it is known for something which others are not (or cannot be), and its image is uniform among employees, clients, prospects, referral sources and the press." ("Law Firm Branding: Is It Working?" Maddock.) Being known for something that others do not or cannot offer allows a law firm to charge premium rates.

During the branding process, a firm should consider the differences between a feature and a brand. Marketing materials need to be able to show the benefit the firm brings to the table. Branding needs to be something that is deeply imbedded in the clients' minds. They need to know the law firm is going to solve their problems and give them the assurance they made the right choice when choosing a law firm.

Larry Bodine is a well known Web and marketing consultant known for his work with Blogs. Bodine stated that a firm can get new business leads and revenue from their website. A website must:

- Show industry experience;
- Show representative clients — indicate who a firm "swims" with and also helps prove the industry experience; and
- Success stories — they can be 4 lines long but show how a firm "saved the day."

Check out www.lawmarketing.com/pages/articles.asp for more articles on this topic.

Bodine stated that a blog is fairly inexpensive to set up and maintain, but the author needs to be

able to add something to the blog once or twice a week. The blog needs to be of a topic that is of interest to their clients. The attorney should notify clients and individuals on the firm's newsletter list. The blog would be a recap — just a couple of paragraphs. According to Technorati.com, there are currently 37 million blogs online, but only 1271 law firm blogs representing 208 categories.

Jeff Reade addressed the group on "Client Relationship Management" while Iris Jones talked about "Why Client Teams Drive Profit With Key Clients and Retain/Expand Work With Clients." Phyllis Haserot spoke on "How To Sell A Coaching Program To Your Firm" and Norm Mullock addressed the group on "Business Intelligence — How Can Firms Use To Drive Business Performance." The panel format was like a lunch dating event. Every ten minutes the conference attendees moved to a different table, or speaker. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to listen to each speaker. However, I have noted their websites below if you would like more information on any of these topics.

- Sally J. Schmidt — sallyschmidt@schmidt-marketing.com
- Larry Bodine — Lbodine@LawMarketing.com
- Norm Mullock — sales@redwoodanalytics.com
- Jeff Reade — jeff@colevally.com
- Charles (Biff) Maddock — camaddock@altmanweil.com
- Phyllis Haserot — pwhaserot@pdcounsel.com
- Iris Jones - ijjones@akingump.com

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