

## SIDEBAR

# Marketing with authenticity



MARKETING

By Mark Powers

In client development seminars and workshops I am often asked whether the most successful rainmakers are effective because of their personality and natural ability – or whether something else is at play.

These people are no doubt thinking of the rainmakers they've seen who navigate every social situation with ease and radiate such self-assurance new clients are continually drawn to them.

You, on the other hand, might be someone who is decidedly not the most comfortable person in unfamiliar social territory. You might experience apprehension when asked to market yourself because you don't believe you're a natural at marketing.

One attorney I know voiced it perfectly: "For me, marketing means I have to 'fake it' and few things are more exhausting than having to fake my way through a marketing event that holds no interest for me. After a few events like that, I decided I don't really have the personality to be a marketer."

So the question remains: If you're not a "natural," are you doomed to either work for those who can make it rain, or condemned to join the ranks of sole practitioners with firms that limp along without ever realizing their full potential?

Fortunately, I've had the pleasure of working with a wide range of personalities, and have been astonished at the variety of creative ways attorneys cultivate business. I firmly believe *anybody* can develop clients even though they don't have the kind of personality we associate with the stereotypical rainmaker.

**Forget the image you may have of the perfect rainmaker. It will only hold you back.**

My advice to you is this: forget the image you may have of the perfect rainmaker. It will only hold you back. Very few people fit the stereotype. The key to marketing success is to identify your own individual strengths and develop a strategy that plays to them.

I'm a big fan of conducting personality profiles to assess the strengths of a particular lawyer and ensure the marketing plan fits that attorney's personality.

If you don't have a personality profile of yourself, the clues lie in your hobbies, passions and interests, both inside and outside the practice of law. When your marketing approach is tied to what you love, your effectiveness as a rainmaker will develop rapidly.

Incorporating your interests into your marketing plan enables you to operate in a comfortable environment and minimizes the anxiety you feel when forced to social-

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ize in other ways. At a Rotary Club dinner, for example, you might feel detached and uninterested because their agenda doesn't engage you. But when involved in something you love – be it playing golf or cooking – your comfort level is higher, you have more fun and you are more fun to be around. You are free to be authentically who you are, engaged in something you believe in.

Let the stereotypical rainmakers storm away; we say create your own microclimate for marketing success.

The examples below detail ways some attorneys have created their own marketing microclimates. They may help you find how you can use your less obvious talents to accomplish your own marketing goals.

- **The sport.**

Jay Fisher, a personal injury attorney with a thriving practice in Maitland, Fla., is both an attorney and a sports agent. Representing football players nationwide, his role as agent allows him enhanced access to athletes and events. But, you don't have to be an agent to use sports to your advantage, according to Cammie Hauser, a Senior Practice Advisor with Atticus.

"Regardless if you are passionate about football, golf, sailing, skiing, or any other recreational activity, sports of all kinds provide the perfect platform for building rapport with referral sources," she said.

Attorneys can market themselves by inviting referral sources to play golf or tennis to go fishing on their boat or ask influencers to attend games with them.

"The love of the game is great excuse to connect and build relationships, both old and new," said Hauser.

- **The family-oriented attorney.**

Many of our attorney clients in their thirties and forties have younger kids and spend a great deal of time focused on family and school activities. They don't have time to go out for drinks and dinner all the time because they have a lot of family obligations. Their marketing approach should focus the contacts they make coaching youth sports, sponsoring activities or participating in parent/teacher organizations. The relationships they build with other up-and-coming professional parents will be the source of their future referrals. Their marketing approach will depend on lunches and daytime activities as they will have less free time in the evenings. But their informal marketing plan can include much of their social life in the community.

- **The gourmet.**

To market themselves and share their passion for food and wine, attorneys who love food have many options. Like attorney Richard West of Orlando, Fla., they can cook for small groups at home or take clients to restaurants they've discovered. They can host, or attend a wine tasting with friends and referral sources or start dinner clubs in which meals are hosted by its members.

"The emphasis here will be on meals: lunches, dinners and other food and wine related events," said Hauser. "They can share recipes or give books to express their love of food and wine. For the attorney who lives to eat, building a marketing plan couldn't be easier."

- **The expert/writer.**

Quite a few of our attorney clients are experts in their given field. Quietly passionate about their subject matter, they excel

at building their reputation through the written word. Writing columns, newsletters, articles and books is how they market themselves and it's a good fit for their less outgoing personalities. In addition, their approach to research can kill two birds with one stone: We ask them to do interviews and it gives them a great reason to initiate lunch meetings with clients and referral resources who can contribute case studies and data to round out their research. This is what we call a "knowledge-based" approach to marketing. Here's a way

an attorney who is not a great socializer can cultivate relationships and build a strong reputation with his or her writing skills.

- **The expert/speaker.**

Jack Ross of Gainesville, Fla., a specialist in business trial law, likes to share his expertise through the spoken word. He presents a seminar entitled *Avoiding Litigation in Business*. The program is typically co-sponsored by other firms or banks and attended by mid-size business owners anxious to avoid or minimize litigation, and therefore it exposes him to large numbers of people who may need his services in the future.

- **The traveler.**

Traveling the world is the passionate pursuit of many attorneys. To incorporate

friends and referral sources, create a photo-journal of a trip to share with others, or like Lonny Balbi, a matrimonial attorney in Calgary, Canada, create a post-vacation event that showcases the food and drink of their destination.

"I love to cook and gathered about twenty friends and influencers together upon my return from Italy," said Balbi. "We had fresh pasta, regional Italian wine and tiramisu for dessert. At the same time, I showed slides of my trip. The staff pitched in and people really seemed to enjoy it."

- **The reader.**

If an interest in reading is your thing, you'll be gratified to know you can turn this to your advantage in marketing. Several years ago, Dick Price of Fort Worth, Texas, founded a study group that discusses business books and practice management techniques on a monthly basis. While Dick's group is comprised of other attorneys, yours might include professionals from any sector of the community that might provide you referrals.

If no group like this exists in your area, start one. If reading business books sounds too much like work, you can form a book club that discusses fiction and is made up of potential referrers. Giving books to thank those who provided a referral could also become your signature gift.

These are just a few examples of the many approaches attorneys take to market themselves. The concept is simple: be yourself. Don't make service club meetings your marketing focus if you aren't genuinely thrilled by their agendas.

Instead of throwing in the towel and saying you don't have the right personality to market your practice, create a focus for your marketing that inspires you and fits your personality.

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