

## Never stop marketing the family law practice

by Mark Powers, Atticus



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*“Never stop marketing!”*

Those were my words to Marsha (not her real name), a Florida family law attorney whom I was coaching. Her question was,

“When can I let up on the marketing?”

Marsha had been following my golden rule for marketing a family law practice, which is *Three direct marketing contacts each week, and at least 20 good referral sources, to maintain a financially successful practice.*

And her practice was growing! She billed more revenue last year than any year prior, but she was getting very busy with clients, training a new paralegal, having to make time for her marketing efforts and doing all the “stuff” of a family law practice. She had more business than she could handle and wanted to back off the marketing.

But I was resolute with her:

“Never stop marketing!” The family law practice is one of the most difficult practices to build, and once you build marketing momentum, you don’t want to back off. Referral marketing efforts can be compared to a well and a water

pump. Once you pump the water to the surface and it is primed, you do not want to let it slip back into the well. It is too much work to keep pumping it to the surface again.

Referral marketing is a lot like that. It takes a good deal of effort to get referrals sending prospective clients, and you have to consistently stay in contact with the referral network, or the referrals start to disappear.

If you stop cultivating your referral sources, when your case load dips and you need new clients, you have to work exponentially harder to get the referral moving again. The key is to continue your marketing efforts, at least three per week, whether it’s a breakfast,

***Consistent marketing is a key to a healthy and successful family law practice. You must always marketing and becoming more selective with the clients you accept.***

lunch or dinner with a referral, or a speaking event. Even just picking up the phone and connecting with a referral source is sometimes enough to keep the pump primed. It is important to stay in action.

That said, one of the most important variables in building a successful family law practice is *intelligent* client selection. What do I mean by intelligent client selection? It is knowing you cannot work with everyone, that you have limits and boundaries, and that your staff will burnout if you continue to try and help everyone.

Intelligent client selection looks at the availability of assets to pay the bill; it recognizes that a jerk as opposing counsel matters; it acknowledges that when the client manipulates the children to affect a divorce proceeding or if they are overly vindictive, there will be a cost. Intelligent client selection knows you don’t barter the retainer.

So herein lies the rub. Marsha cannot be selective about the clients she accepts into the practice if she doesn’t have enough prospects from which to choose. Meaning consistent marketing is a key to a healthy and successful family law practice. Marsha must always be marketing and becoming more selective with the clients she accepts.

So, what does our heroine Marsha do? Actually the solution is quite simple, not to mention profitable. The solution is to keep marketing and limit the number of clients she accepts into the practice. Marsha needs to become even

more selective than she was before.

This, in fact, for lack of a better term, “chokes” the frontend or the client intake process. How does Marsha choke the client intake

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process without stopping the marketing efforts? She should raise her consultation, retainer and hourly fees. A small increase in hourly fees will have a significant impact on revenues and, in the process, weed out “C” and “D” clients.

This may sound harsh, but the good news is, there is no shortage of family law attorneys to work with clients you are unable to accept, and you will have more time and more resources to help the clients you do accept.

So, if the golden rule for a sustainable and financially healthy family law practice is three direct marketing contacts per week and 20 good referral sources, what does this mean to you? If you have not been marketing, start now. Referral marketing is the primary form of marketing I advocate for a family law practice. It is simple, inexpensive and effective. And,

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when done properly, it builds trust and memorable moments within your referral network.

If you are uncomfortable with marketing, get yourself trained, get a coach, join a marketing roundtable, just do something. Marketing is essential for your success, and you must focus on it every week. You need to maintain a consistent routine and practice good marketing habits.

I also recommend learning three types of marketing conversations. The first is what we call a Laser Talk. A Laser Talk is a simple and direct introduction that lets your referral source know who your ideal clients are, how you benefit them and what is unique about you and your practice.

Second, learn the interview process, which is a method to let your referral source discuss their concerns about referring and allow them to connect more deeply with you.

Third, learn how to tell a good marketing story. Storytelling, in the referral marketing world, is the art of discussing yourself and your practice in a light, unassuming manner that communicates your marketing message. And your marketing message is that you can help certain types of people and do it well.

Finally, over time you can learn to ask your network for new referrals directly. This last one obviously takes practice and confidence.

Start your referral marketing efforts with your “safer” contacts, people who are friends and colleagues that feel more comfortable with you. Once you feel more comfortable, start stretching yourself and talk to people who are a bit more risky. Also, try to reframe your attitude about marketing. Remind yourself that the vast majority of people in your referral network want to help you succeed.

To get started, meet with your partners and staff. Discuss the various marketing activities you could do this year, this month, next week. Plan a party around an upcoming holiday or occasion and

invite referral sources to attend. Arrange to speak at a Bar association program. Set up a dinner in your home and introduce two referral sources to each other. Build a Habitat for Humanity home and invite your referral network to join you. Make three calls this week to referral sources that you haven’t connected with in some time. Begin a newsletter to your clients and referral sources. Play a game of golf and invite three referral sources to play with you. Set up a lunch with your clergy or rabbi. Do something. Get into action. Don’t wait.

**If you stop cultivating your referral sources, when your case load dips and you need new clients, you have to work exponentially harder to get the referral moving again. persistence.**

Successful marketing is less about finesse and more about showing up. It is about persistence. It is about putting one foot in front of the other and taking action ... even when you don’t want to. Do something, do it today

*Mark Powers is the president of Atticus, a training and development company that helps attorneys take better care of their clients, increase their income and decrease their stress. He also hosts a marketing roundtable that keeps family law attorneys focused on simple but effective marketing activities and keeps them in action each and every week. For details, call 888/644-0022 or e-mail him at mark@atticusonline.com.*