

The Sharper Lawyer



Helping
Lawyers
Generate
More Fees

Cynthia Sharp, Esquire
Business Development Expert

NO-COST/LOW-COST LAW
FIRM MARKETING:
DEFINING AND FINDING THE
TARGET AUDIENCE

by Cynthia Sharp, Esq.

Article, ABA GP Solo eReport, January 2016

NO-COST/LOW-COST LAW FIRM MARKETING: DEFINING AND FINDING THE TARGET AUDIENCE

No-Cost/Low-Cost Law Firm Marketing: Defining and Finding the Target Audience

Vol. 5, No. 6

January 2016

Cynthia Sharp

Business development expert and veteran attorney Cynthia Sharp (CEO of The Sharper Lawyer) is author of The Lawyer's Guide to Financial Planning recently published by ABA Solo, Small Firm and General Practice Division. She works with motivated lawyers seeking to generate additional revenue for their law firms.

For up-to-date information and commentary on business development and financial planning issues, visit Cindy's You Tube Channel or website at www.thesharperlady.com. Contact her directly at cindy@thesharperlady.com or 609-923-1017.

Establishing and implementing a successful no-cost/low-cost law firm marketing plan that consistently generates high-quality clients is a huge commitment. But for those willing to stick with such an initiative, even when immediate results are not forthcoming, the professional rewards are immense.

Some attorneys don't believe that they should have to engage in focused marketing efforts and instead simply wait for clients to find them. Although they may attract clients and make a living, they are selling themselves short. With a little strategy and effort, these same lawyers could build an even more successful practice, which they may even be able to sell on the attorney's retirement or reirement.

Modern marketing philosophies emphasize "pull" marketing which engages the audience through a carefully crafted key message. Many lawyers naturally distribute their firm's message by writing and speaking, which is a form of "content marketing"—an excellent and relatively inexpensive avenue by which to engage a target audience by educating them. Most lawyers, however, neglect to leverage the message by distributing it in numerous formats to the target audience. For example, an article can be repurposed into the following: speech, video, blog, web content, shorter articles, client alerts, newsletter column, and more! So much work goes into developing intellectual property, why not reuse the material?

Another significant shortfall that can be remedied easily is the failure to define and find the professional's target audience. The following information will prove a helpful start.

Define Target Audience

The three components of a lawyer's target audience (distinguished from target market) are Ideal Client, Ideal Referral Source, and Media Outlets.

Ideal Client—Begin by defining your Ideal Client and then determine whether those you currently serve meet this threshold definition. The criteria include type of case, fee range, and relevant demographic data. This is the time to consider shedding unprofitable areas of practice.

Ideal Referral Source—Start by making a list of current referral sources. Each type of referral source may require different marketing. All lawyers can consider their clients as well as other lawyers as prime sources of new business. Otherwise, lawyers can look to other professionals serving the same sector and cultivate relationships.

Media Outlets—Becoming known for your expertise can result in free media exposure. Reporters for traditional outlets such as newspapers, journals, radio, and television rely on resources to generate accurate and interesting stories. The online world is replete with opportunity.

Find Target Audience

After identifying your target audience, the next step is to find them—either in traditional venues or online. Locating referral sources can be a more straightforward process than locating potential clients. For example, professional referral sources can be found through relevant associations.

If you plan to use a website and social media as a key strategy, you will need to understand the online behavior patterns of your target audience.

How does your ideal client or referral source use social media? What are the preferred platforms and categories of content that appeal to them? What topics do they post and share? Significant data regarding the use of social media by various sectors has been compiled by online research entities. Locate the studies. Use and adapt them to your unique situation.

LinkedIn groups have proven useful to me and to others. I have even met business contacts through Twitter.

Tip: Check out social media pages of others in your field, both competitors and professionals in another locale. What topics are popular? Are their connections commenting and sharing?

Tip: Conduct a keyword search on each relevant social media platform with the goal of finding the top keywords related to your service and keywords your target audience would use to discover content or information about your area. This search should be done periodically, as it may change depending on external influences. This will lead you to sites frequented by your target audience. Be sure to base future content creation on popular keywords that indicate people's areas of interest.

Conclusion

The competitive legal marketplace demands a focused approach to marketing. Law firms engaging in a one-size-fits-all approach are found in the dead center of the sea of sameness. Successful differentiation begins with (1) developing and repurposing relevant content, (2) defining target audience, and (3) finding target audience. Content marketing builds trust and loyalty when lawyers persistently and consistently engage in productive conversations and provide quality education. Content marketing can play a valuable role in a law firm's no-cost/low-cost marketing program—provided that a long-term commitment is made to strategize and participate in the development and efficient distribution of meaningful information.