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## Maximizing Marketing Mileage For Attorneys

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You're a solo practitioner. Or member of a small firm. You may have a general practice. Or, you may be in a recognized specialty such as patent, copyright and trademark law.

Regardless of the specifics of your situation, you know you need to make and take the time to market your practice.

In today's competitive legal environment, however, attorneys committed to marketing are faced with the dilemma of generating those pivotal billable hours that make the firm or practice profitable, while carving out the time to engage in marketing activities that will, ultimately, generate new business.

So, how does the savvy attorney who thinks that marketing his or her practice might really make a difference justify the commitment of non-billable hours? One approach is to generate several successful marketing results based on the preparation time — those non-billable hours — needed to get ready for one marketing opportunity.

### It All Adds Up

While getting in the news or conducting a well-attended seminar may be stimulating for the attorney being interviewed or speaking, it will not, in most cases, directly generate new business by itself. That's because no single marketing activity will produce referrals when used alone.

Rather, it's the coordinated effort that may also include such efforts as writing newsletters, publishing op-ed articles or getting interviewed by the local business radio station that are — together — the cohesive pieces of the marketing puzzle.

In short, each marketing activity that is undertaken is more valuable when combined with other elements of an organized marketing effort. The momentum generated by an ongoing public relations and/or advertising campaign builds with the introduction of each new marketing component.

Most importantly, once you have executed a well-conceived marketing action designed to generate publicity, increase name recognition or reach your specific marketing goal, you can maximize the return on your investment of time by undertaking additional marketing activities on that same subject without sacrificing additional billable hours.

### Preparation Is The Key

If you are committed to allocating some non-billable hours to preparation for a given marketing opportunity, remember that focusing on thorough preparation now will enhance your chances of generating a greater return on your investment of preparation time in the future.

Consider this scenario: You're a litigator who has been asked to be part of an interview with a local television station. You expect to pontificate on the findings in a highly publicized criminal trial. You research the case, learn the history, get case citations and pick out your best power suit.

In your zest for preparation, you may have missed, however, the key questions that will allow you to truly shine by placing your contribution in the appropriate context. Have you determined who else is being interviewed? What is the angle? When will the story air? Are you well versed in the more peripheral issues surrounding the trial that may be only partly legal?

Consider a second example. You may be a corporate and health care attorney asked by the one of the statewide medical associations to write about a new area of the law that affects health care. Again, you research, write, edit, revise and send in your submission with your favorite black-and-white head shot to the publication editor or organization's executive director.

Like your litigator counterpart, the same type of questions are relevant. Did you step back to view the big picture? Does your work meet the criteria for length? Did you consider excluding those legal citations and footnotes which muddy your message? Have you translated the information for a non-lawyer audience?

The point is that skimping on preparation will probably result in a skimpy payoff. In fact, your television sound bites — and unless you are going on live television, that's what they will be — may not be used at all. Or, your scholarly legal treatise may be viewed as too pretentious even for an erudite medical audience.

Preparation, therefore, not only serves to promote your goal in the short term, it also provides you with the basis to generate those additional marketing

activities without the additional investment of non-billable hours.

### Additional Mileage

So you made it through the television interview. Your article for the medical association was a hit. You're ready to take off the jacket of that power suit, kick back and get down to the business at hand: being a lawyer. You are gratified that you did not embarrass yourself, your family, your colleagues and the profession.

You wince at the number of non-billable hours on your timesheet for the week. You do the math, noting the large

number of non-billable hours that resulted in a 15-minute interview which produced a 30-second sound bite. Or, you try to justify the time spent revising and fine-tuning your article, which may not appear for two months. But, after all, it was kind of fun. Now it's back to business, right?

Not totally. You've researched, read, wrote and thought about — in detail — the subject on which you were called upon to speak or write. Now is your opportunity to garner that additional mileage from your initial marketing assignment.

If you're the litigator/television commentator, you might want to contact the editor of the local newspaper in your hometown to ask if he or she would be interested in running an op-ed or commentary piece by you on the subject for which

you have prepared. (Be sure to get the stylistic guidelines, audience profile, word count and other requirements so your effort doesn't get thrown out on a technicality.) You may even want to offer to share your newfound knowledge and perspective as a speaker for the bar association or for your colleagues in the office.

As the corporate or health care attorney-cum-author, you could pitch the idea for a story on the subject at hand to the appropriate editor at the popular statewide or business publication, highlighting the fact that one of the leading physician organizations in the state recently asked you to author an article on that very subject for their widely distributed and well-read newsletter. You, of course, are available to be interviewed as the expert resource by the newspaper journalist, as well as to supply the background information, including statistics, trends and other research you may have gathered.

**Once you have executed a well-conceived marketing action designed to generate publicity, increase name recognition or reach your specific marketing goal, you can maximize the return on your investment of time by undertaking additional marketing activities on that same subject without sacrificing additional billable hours.**

### Wealth Of Opportunities

Selecting the right marketing opportunity depends on a variety of factors. Is your target audience a consumer or attorney audience? Or both? Do you feel more comfortable writing an article over which you have a great deal of control, or being interviewed by the media with no input into which portions of your interview are used, if any?

In addition to the local and statewide consumer, business and trade publications, radio talk shows and television news segments, attorneys should consider reaching their current clients via direct mail and seminars. (Statistics for law firm marketing continue to show that cross-selling directly to current clients is still the best way to generate new business.)

Authoring a one-page explanation of a current law that cites the direct impact this law does or may have on a client creates an excellent direct mailer for clients and friends of the firm. Or, you may choose to offer tips, write on frequently asked questions or identify common misconceptions about a not-so-new legal area. You may even decide, instead, to send a seminar announcement that doesn't spell out every relevant provision of the new law, for example, but does mention the key points to be addressed at the upcoming event.

Finally, regardless of whether your clients actually use — or even read — the information you send, you have garnered exposure for your practice through name recognition, positioned yourself as an "expert" in the legal area, and, quite possibly, upgraded your overall image merely through the fact that you or your firm actually provides timely and/or substantive information to clients or holds seminars.

### Return On Investment

Does a solo practitioner, a small law practice or even a large law firm have the time to commit numerous non-billable hours to marketing when times are economically challenging?

On the other hand, what will the future hold if new business development is not initiated to increase fee-generating matters during the down times?

One important consideration in reaching the decision on whether to invest time in marketing your practice must be the return-on-investment. Generating additional marketing opportunities from the non-billable hours used to prepare for one interview or seminar will greatly improve your return on investment and maximize your marketing mileage.

Finally, both Rhode Island and Massachusetts have rules in place that govern marketing for attorneys, and, specifically, direct mail, advertising and claims of expertise. Attorneys committed to marketing, and moreover, generating additional marketing opportunities from an initial activity, should consult these rules in order to avoid ethical violations.

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