



## MARKETING 101 LESSON FOR YOUNG LAWYERS

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If you've read any of my articles on marketing before, you know that I am a big believer in teaching young lawyers to market. I believe that marketing is a *learned* skill. Sure, there are some who are naturals. And they will require little if any guidance. But the fact is that the majority of attorneys are not naturals. That doesn't mean they cannot learn. It means that they have to be taught and shown good marketing skills, and then have the ability to practice those skills to become accomplished in them.

It is in your firm's best interest to assist them in this regard. Think about it. Does it make sense for you to invest countless hours assisting them in developing their professional skills, and then risk throwing away that investment when you discover they don't survive in a sink-or-swim marketing environment? Of course not. I'm still trying to figure out why attorneys readily acknowledge that freshly-minted attorneys need mentoring help on the professional side, but resist the notion that the business side might require the same care and attention.

Here is one simple lesson that is just so obvious it is often overlooked. I know because it came up during a conference call with a client the other day. The client mentioned it in passing like what happened was just dumb luck. But it wasn't. Well, I guess in a sense it was dumb luck, because it was a strategy they employed by accident, which paid off big time. And even after it paid off they didn't figure out it was something they might purposefully repeat.

Another attorney I know who had knowingly and purposefully engaged this strategy successfully built a 4.5 million book of business as a result. So what was really significant to me wasn't the strategy itself, but rather was the fact that my client didn't realize that what they thought was dumb luck was in fact a highly successful marketing strategy. And that means it can be purposely and thoughtfully used again and again. And even more importantly, taught to their young partners and associates.

Why not pass the information along to their young partners and associates, I asked. They were amazed at how simple the suggestion was, yet how totally *not* obvious it had been to that point. And, they instantly understood, it was a significant suggestion, and a significant strategy. Yet, until someone from outside the firm pointed it out to them, it would never have occurred to them to pass it along as information of value. As you read about it, you will be amazed at how truly simple and basic it is. Ready?

**Treat every second and third and fourth tier person at a client as though they were the number one person in charge. Respond to them as though your very existence depended on it. Treat them as well as, or maybe even better than, the number one person in charge. Make them aware that they are extremely important to you, and that their work and requests are treated likewise. Help them out in other ways to enhance their success whenever possible.**

Why is this simple strategy so effective? Very simple. People tend to move up and out. When you cultivate the relationship with the top dog, and treat those lower in the organization with lesser care and attention, you will likely not retain the client when the top dog leaves, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Those who move up the ladder remember how they were treated when they were less “significant”, and react appropriately when they have the power to do so.

If you have done your job of carefully cultivating relationships with those who are lower on the totem pole, they will be so appreciative of the way they were treated when they were *not* at the top, they will keep you on and maybe even give you more work and trust than their predecessor did.

Ok, it sounds so simple, why isn't it done all the time? Simple human nature. The number one person is treated as such. Everyone else is an underling there for the sole purpose of supporting the number one person. If you have your choice most of the time you want to deal with the number one person. The others don't call the shots. They are often viewed as merely people, sometimes even obstacles, to be managed and navigated in an effort to efficiently service the number one person.

If you learn this simple lesson, in the best of all worlds you will get work from the former CEO when he or she moves to another position, and more work from the current CEO who has moved up. Sweet! Ok, it doesn't necessarily help if the new top dog is recruited from outside. But if you're a bit lucky, that new top dog will be a #2 or #3 person you've treated like royalty elsewhere.



Simple, yes. Obvious? No. Especially to young partners and associates. They may not realize that it's just as important to "suck up" to people lower on the totem pole. Tell them. And while you're at it, think about some of the other things you do or have done which seemed to work out with luck, but may actually be worth imparting as strategy, and employing purposefully. Usually people make their own luck; it doesn't just happen. And remember, if it's not obvious to you, chances are it's even less obvious to others.

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