

NEW LEGAL MARKETING PROFESSIONALS: TIPS FOR SUCCESS

BY
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Congratulations! You're hired. You have successfully secured a job in law firm marketing. You may now find yourself asking: What does it take to be successful in this field? After meeting with Marketing Professionals from many Firms in New York, the answer is: It takes many different skills to be successful. They all agreed that being a respected Marketing Professional requires, first and foremost, that you immediately work towards gaining credibility in the eyes of the Partnership and your non-lawyer Supervisors. Their combined insights provided the following strategies for achieving success quickly.

Possessing a **client service orientation** is the first key to being a successful marketing professional. Your clients are the Firm's lawyers and, by extension, their clients. Be responsive to their emails, phone calls and general inquiries. Since many Marketing Professionals are bombarded daily with requests from their attorneys, keeping a running "to-do" list enables you to track your progress. Even if you are unable to produce an answer or remedy to their problem immediately, acknowledge their request and let them know you are working towards a solution. Quick attention to your lawyer's and supervisor's needs and requests will immediately show that you are a reliable part of the team.

Another skill many of the successful marketing professionals we spoke to clearly possess is the ability to **manage time effectively**. You will probably find that you will work with Partner X who, at least twice weekly, asks you to re-write the Firm bio and a couple of practice area descriptions for a proposal to potential clients. Partner X will most likely require that each of these proposals be proofread by him, copied on specific paper and bound within a very strict timeframe. It could be that Partner X is requiring a great deal of your time but the end product does not generate results for business development. Create a system to track your own personal return on investment! How many projects have you worked on and how many have ended with a new client engaging the firm? How many were dead-end projects with no results – you never heard another word about the project? Being able to provide a ROI report to your manager will be useful when you are asked where you are spending your time or why the department needs a new assistant. Investing time and resources in the attorneys who are most likely to generate results and managing your daily schedule effectively will allow you the time to work on the initiatives that ARE going to generate business.

Demonstrate **good communication skills** especially in cases where the attorneys have unrealistic expectations for you. Let them know what you are currently working on and the steps that will come in to play in order to complete their task. Should a time conflict arise, be sure to go to your supervisor to seek a remedy. A good understanding of your communication style as well as the different styles of your lawyers will prove useful when you have to begin the tedious follow-up process with an attorney who has promised something to you by a deadline. Using their "language" will improve your luck at obtaining what you need. When beginning a new job, one of the first things you should do is ask your supervisor or peers about the style of the attorney. Find out if that person has any "preferences" that you need to be aware of that will help you start

on the right foot. You may also find out if the person assigning the project prefers email communication rather than hand written notes or voice mail. The attorneys you work with in the Firm will require different strategies but recognizing this will get you faster responses and results. Another good communication tactic is to consider providing weekly status reports to your supervisor to keep him updated on the progress of ongoing projects. Do not “hole up” and expect that people who have assigned work to you will check on your progress.

Planning is a must. A successful Marketing Professional is one who has established a plan of action but is prepared to modify the plan along the way. If your goal is to produce a practice group newsletter once each quarter and the Associate or Partner Editor repeatedly misses a deadline, be ready to resort to plan “b”. Most of the time, if they agree to complete a task (or in an Associate’s case -- have been “requested” to complete a task) they have good intentions. However, completing their lawyering obligations is their first priority so your project may take a back seat. If you are flexible, you will find success by offering to help in any way you can. Perhaps you offer to provide research on a particular topic or solicit articles from other sources in order to get your project done according to plan.

Always stay “one step ahead” of your lawyers – anticipate their needs and wants. In the beginning, this task may be difficult, but once you learn the habits and goals of your lawyers, you will be able to be **proactive**. Come fully armed to each meeting with all resources they may ask for. Think of it in terms of what you would ask for if someone was coming to meet with you: provide the reasoning behind the task at hand; give research to support the reasoning; outline the costs to perform the task; identify who is the target audience. After a meeting, offer to summarize the talking points or volunteer to facilitate the completion of the task list. Your position as a Marketing Professional will immediately add value to the meeting and put you in a strategic position.

Make your supervisors and your lawyers look good and **make their lives easier!** Look for things to do, even if it means going out of your way to do so, that can make your supervisor and lawyers look good in front of other lawyers or even clients. For example, if one of your Partners has a meeting scheduled with a prospective client, provide them with research on this client to prepare them well for the meeting, even if they did not request the information.

Professional visibility, both internally and externally, can be very beneficial to a Marketing Professional at any level. Consider volunteering to participate in firm events (subject to your supervisor’s approval) such as a United Way campaign or holiday toy drive. Join the Legal Marketing Association and become active in the local chapter. Each time you contribute in a positive and substantial way, you will become known for going beyond what is expected and be the kind of professional everyone wants on their team – one with a “can do, will do” attitude!