

The Legal Marketer's Mindset: How Puzzles Can Help Us Solve Problems

I've been reading *The Puzzler: One Man's Quest to Solve the Most Baffling Puzzles Ever*, by A.J. Jacobs. I was drawn to this book because 1) previous books by A.J. Jacobs are amazing, and 2) I have a daily puzzle ritual. Maybe you can relate.

The Spelling Bee. Wordle. The Mini. The Daily.

Those of you who also play the Spelling Bee will understand when I say that reaching "genius" level is practically a requirement before my head hits the pillow. Or maybe you're in a Wordle text group, competing against family and friends?

What is it that compels us to do puzzles? A [Time Magazine](#) article published in May 2002 highlights some of the book's concepts about what draws many of us to puzzles. Jacobs coined the term "puzzler mindset," the hallmarks of which include "being deeply curious, solution-oriented, rigorous, cognitively flexible, and good at taking other people's perspectives." His view is that puzzlers "get curious, not furious," with a real desire to figure things out– to solve problems.

Practicing law requires this mindset, this desire to solve problems. The steps lawyers take to find solutions for their clients' issues can be straightforward, creative, risky, sometimes even precedent-setting. Similarly, law firm marketers can approach the development and execution of marketing programs with a "puzzler mindset." Figuring out what kind of marketing will fit a law firm and its lawyers' needs is a puzzle that requires a mixture of the elements Jacobs includes in his puzzler mindset.

Be Deeply Curious

Lawyers are comfortable with asking questions, getting to the heart of the matter, dismissing any red herrings. But during a PR intake meeting, for example, the lawyer is the one answering the questions. Marketers and publicists need to be deeply curious and ask questions about the lawyer's practice, such as:

- What is it about your practice that sets you apart?
- Who are your clients, and how do they come to you?
- Who ultimately engages you for legal services?
- Do you receive work from colleagues at your firm?
- What part of practicing law do you enjoy most?
- How did you get into this area of law?

With an understanding of the lawyer's practice, the marketing questions can turn toward the lawyer's preferences, such as:



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- Do you enjoy speaking to large audiences at conferences?
- How do you feel about talking to a reporter?
- Do you have an interest in writing articles, perhaps 1,000 – 1,500 words?
- Are you a fan of [LinkedIn](#)?

When we meet with attorneys for these intake calls, the goal is to appreciate the lawyer's [BDI](#) (Business Development) and formulate a [marketing strategy](#) that best suits their preferences.

Be Solution-Oriented

Lawyers counsel their clients by providing solutions to both obvious and not-so-obvious legal problems. When they start to learn about marketing tactics, there can be some skepticism about results. Marketers can see the obvious problem – for instance, an attorney needs to build a book of business. The tactics can vary, but the solution in mind is for that attorney to, in fact, *build a book of business*. To be solution-oriented is to select the tactics most likely to solve a problem. This means that media outreach needs to be meaningful, with efforts aimed at earning coverage in the publications that actually reach a lawyer's target audience of prospects and/or referral sources. It means that social media campaigns must be strategic and consistent to generate awareness and establish credibility. Purchased ads have to deliver a message to readers. Podcasts must offer listeners what they want to learn about. In sum, our tactics must have purpose.

Be Rigorous

Approach marketing tactics with rigor and assure the lawyer that their efforts will yield benefits *if* we can stick with the program together and work consistently at advancing the goal. In other words, don't give up.

For example, outreach may result in [media interviews](#), but there is no guarantee that the reporter will use the attorney's quotes in the published article. Keep at it, though. Doing more interviews is like practicing an oral argument and improving that skill set. Keep the end goal in mind. A media placement is an excellent marketing tool; it may start with an interview, but it can result in a published article, which then is promoted on social media, added to the firm's website content and packaged in a client communication to showcase the attorney's area of experience. The process of earning media coverage cannot be a one-time attempt – the tactic of media outreach, and law firm marketing overall, has to be rigorous and continuous to be successful.

Be Cognitively Flexible

Legal marketing also requires cognitive flexibility, or the ability to see an issue through several different lenses. If a pitch that offers a lawyer as a source to a certain group of media outlets falls flat, look at it again from another perspective. Try to rework the angle, tie it into a current news story, or go back to the attorney and ask for new details. Jacobs mentions having "grit" in tackling problems. A puzzler keeps trying to solve the puzzle, erasing wrong answers and starting again. He writes, "If you fall in love with a wrong solution, you'll never succeed."

Be Good at Taking Other Peoples' Perspectives

Jacobs writes about game theory and logic puzzles that require the puzzler to view problems through different perspectives. In marketing, it's the ability to step into another's shoes. Be the listener to the podcast, the attendee at the conference, the blog reader. Determine the impact that the attorney's marketing efforts can have on the intended audience.

- Will the lawyer's speech result in new business connections at an event, or should the lawyer follow up with personal emails a few days later, maybe to share a media placement that underscores the legal and business issues their presentation reviewed?
- Will a reporter find a pitch interesting and persuasive enough to ask for an interview, or should the pitch include more insight from the attorney?
- Is the firm's networking event going to enable conversation easily, or should the furniture in the event space be rearranged to improve the flow?

Sometimes taking another perspective means disagreeing with the status quo, but with purpose, the new angle serves to improve the outcome of the marketing tactic.

Skills for Making Decisions, Plus Great Networking Trivia

Jacobs's book is a thorough investigation of puzzles and the people who love them. The puzzler's mindset that he describes can apply to any number of problem-solving scenarios; certainly the practice of law, and the selection and [execution of marketing tactics](#), fits that mindset. He connects these fundamentals to real-life problem-solving skills for making decisions. If nothing else, the book gives puzzlers excellent justification for being obsessed with the Spelling Bee or any number of other challenging puzzles (try Semantle, Quordle, Nerdle, Quintessential).

Whether your obsession is a corn maze, a big jigsaw puzzle or sudoku, Jacobs's book is a fun read and will leave you with plenty of trivia for networking events, such as: The biggest cube puzzle (think of the original 3 x 3 x 3-inch Rubik's cube) is 33 x 33 x 33 with 6,153 moving parts, and it would take an estimated 500 hours to make all of the turns.

Interested in figuring out how the PR puzzle fits into your legal practice? Reach out to me, Liz Lindley, at llindley@jaffepr.com.