

# 6 Ways to Jump-start Your M&BD Program

The world and the legal profession – especially smaller and midsize law firms – are changing radically and rapidly. To adapt to these changes, the future requires thoughtful, proactive planning and bold leadership so law firms can respond to challenges and compete as viable entities.

Marketing and **business development** are the lifeblood of any business. Marketing communicates and promotes the **firm's brand** and promise to its communities and audiences, creating a direct link to them, their expectations, their needs and, in some cases, their demands.

Unfortunately, and way too often, firms are doing the same old things when it comes to legal marketing because "We've always done it this way." Even worse, budget constraints and strategic directions are set by equity partners who are unwilling to support a marketing and business development program, or there is a "Let's wait and see what the other firms are doing" attitude.

This has to change!

Innovation in legal services requires looking at things from different perspectives so you understand the reasons behind what you do. Therefore, doing something because "that's the way we've always done it" won't work.

Here are six marketing and business development tips that will help jump-start your law firm's marketing program.

## Assess Your Clients

Start with current clients. Review your client base and put clients into categories, beginning with those you want to keep. Consider breaking down your list using this rating system:

- A-List—your top, most-profitable clients
- B-List—OK, but not great
- C-List—drags on productivity and profitability; may need to fire these

## Establish a Business Development Model

A model simply represents your law firm's philosophy about business development and how it works. The model should include:



**Terry M. Isner**  
Owner/CEO  
Branding & Business  
Development  
302.519.8895  
tisner@jaffepr.com

- Why people buy
- How they buy
- Their motivations and fears
- The firm's process for finding prospects and converting them into clients
- Where business comes from
- Making sure your business development efforts focus on *building* relationships
- How to become a trusted advisor to your clients and community
- Identifying the firm's and lawyers' differentiators and how those characteristics align with your clients and their needs

## Set Goals and Create Plans

Set marketing and business development goals, and devise a tactical plan to reach those goals using an integrated marketing approach for greater reach and impact.

In addition, you should require all partners and associates to develop individual marketing and business development plans.

## Leverage Your Attorneys' Talents

Assess the marketing skills of your attorneys and inspire them to grow in the tactical areas in which they are most comfortable. For example, some folks are best at hanging out behind the scenes and writing, while others shine in public forums. For the former, line up bylined article opportunities and blog posts. For the latter, book them for speaking engagements and networking events. Everyone should be contributing to the firm's marketing initiative in some way.

## Review Your Current Marketing & Business Development Activities

Look at current marketing and business development activities, which may include any of the following:

- Website and Internet Marketing
- Advertising
- PR
- Brochures and Newsletters
- Firm Events & Seminars
- Charitable Contributions
- Rankings and Directories
- Staffing
- Lawyer Sales Training

If you do conduct sales training for lawyers, ask yourself the following and make changes as needed:

- How much business derives from each of these activities?
- How important is this as a branding and marketing tool?

- How important are these activities in the business development process?
- What tools or tactics are missing, and how should we implement those?
- What tools or tactics are new, and should we implement those?

## Listen

Through marketing tools and activities, listen to your communities and clients, and provide them with what they want.

Our recommendations will not be easy to implement. In fact, many of them will be rather difficult because they require bold leadership, change and accountability. Implementing them, though, will help you and your law firm move into the future and compete effectively in a continually changing landscape and world.

If you need assistance with jump-starting your business development program, contact me, [Terry M. Isner](mailto:tisner@jaffepr.com), at [tisner@jaffepr.com](mailto:tisner@jaffepr.com).