

Law Firm Business Development: What Do You Mean by “Marketing”?

By [LawVision](#) on September 17, 2015

The vast majority of our clients devote a certain amount of non-billable time to “Marketing.” The amount of hours vary from firm-to-firm, but are usually around 10% of total billable hours on an annual basis. In many cases, the feedback that I hear when I begin working with a new client is “I spend around 200 hours a year on “marketing,” but I see very little return on this investment of time.”

When asked how this “marketing” time is being spent, sometimes I get a blank stare, but most often the answer I get actually reflects “business development” activity with little or no “marketing” activity at all. How do we draw the distinction between “marketing” and “business development”? Marketing activities are the “one-to-many” activities like speaking, writing a blog, social media, etc. Whereas, business development activities are the “one-to-few” activities like lunches, cocktails, pitch meetings, etc. It’s important to have a healthy mix of both; e.g., partners’ mix should be 20% marketing and 80% business development. When we draw this distinction with clients, the reaction is almost always the same and is some version of “I hadn’t ever thought of it that way before.” When you think of “marketing” in these terms, rather than marketing as a general catch-all bucket, it’s likely going to be easier for you to figure out why the investment time in marketing hasn’t been as fruitful as you would like. Typically, the reason for this is that there isn’t a good mix of marketing and business development activities; too heavy on the marketing activities and you’re not giving yourself an opportunity to advance the relationship, whereas if your only focused on business development, you’re likely missing market opportunities due to lack of brand awareness.

Marketing activities set the stage for business development activities that should be focused on relationship development. We hear “Cast a wide net...” in this industry all the time. Your marketing activities will help you cast that wide net and your business development activities should be a more narrowly focused overlay of activities that align with your business development goals—typically built upon where you’ve been successful before. This combination of marketing and business development activities will help you achieve great “sales” results.