

Popular Threads on Solosez

A System For Tracking Marketing Results

Does anyone have an organized way to track how clients (or even prospects) have found their way to you? I was thinking of creating an excel spreadsheet and keeping tally that way, but why re-invent the wheel if someone has created a better way to keep track.

Shane L. Jimison, Richmond, Virginia

I believe contact management software can handle this, and am in the process of researching the best software to meet my needs. I posted a few days ago seeking recommendations on contact management software. Some people have suggested ACT!, but the reviews I have read of the product are negative. I have heard positive things about Goldmine and Time & Chaos. Also try www.homeofficereports.com - they have an extensive review of contact management software programs.

Lisa Solomon, New York

Add a field in your contact manager. Sort by that field. Outlook, for instance, has more than 100 defined fields for a contact. Only a few show on the standard form but it is not hard to add others. "Referred by" is one of several that could serve. If you create a View sorted by a field it will show the number of items in each field group. You can also create user defined fields, but I don't think you can sort by those fields.

John P. Page, Florida

In TimeMatters, you can enter codes in the contact information so that you can sort for "client" vs. "prospect." When the prospect becomes a client, you change the code from "PRO" to "CLI".

On a different page of the same contact info, I enter the date of first contact, and the manner in which the client came to me (this I customized for me). I have a drop down menu that allows me click on my regular methods of contact (for example, referral from Joe Smith), or you can "fill in the blank" (either way in my method). If you want, you can limit the answers and force a choice (for example, referral, speech, self-referred, yellow pages, other; and then make it a required field).

You'd think requesting how the contact came to contact you (or the reverse) would be automatic in ANY contact management software (hint to all you AIC's reading when you give feedback to TimeMatters) but it isn't in TM. However, you can customize not only to be *able* to put in that information, but to *require* that information before the form is completed the first time.

Now, I will point out, because it isn't clear from your question that you know this, that you should not only be keeping track of how your clients come to you, you should be keeping track of every single marketing contact you make. For example, if you keep proper records, you should be able to tell me how many phone calls you receive on your yellow pages ad, how many of those calls convert to appointments, how many of those appointments are kept, and how many of those appointments convert to paying clients. I have always tracked

this via paper.

Becki Fahle, San Antonio, Texas

I'm going to elaborate, because that email isn't quite clear. I have always kept track of *casual phone call contacts* via paper, and I don't transfer this to my contact software unless the person asks for an appointment or additional information. So each week, I have a paper sheet with a tick mark for every sales call, every prospect call (information or appointment?), every client call, every vendor call, every court call, etc. (calls in to my office, not calls out). Paper simply works best with a receptionist, too (or it did when I had one, several years ago now).

Once someone asks for information or an appointment and I actually open up a contact record for them, I record where they came from (until then, notes are paper, and just put into the potential client file, which is later transferred to the client file if they become a client--new file every year, never gets very big).

However, when I started using time matters, I started tracking all other marketing methods inside time matters. For example, if I went to a trade show and got (say) 59 names, I could look into my contact software and tell you what trade show I met them at, what the incentive was (if any), how many of those people converted to a seminar, an appointment, how many converted to clients, how much money was generated, the cost per lead acquired, and the gross income per lead acquired and per dollar spent (well, actually, that requires a little math, I'm not a power user of TimeMatters, and I don't own BillingMatters).

I can also tell you (for my lead generation ads/postcards) how many people called, what I sent them and when (for example, information, newsletters 1, 2, 3, thank-you note, etc.), whether they attended a seminar, average time to convert to an appointment, how many converted to an appointment, etc.

I can also tell you that the yellow pages is the single biggest source of junk mail and junk calls I have *ever* seen (still necessary if you have a consumer practice). I know this because I had a physical address in my yellow pages ad (not my mailing address) and nowhere else, and I started getting junk mail there. Ditto the sales calls, which were coming to a line solely for the YP ad and not listed *anywhere* else.

I know exactly how much each form of formal advertising (including yellow pages) that I do/have done costs me to generate a call, to generate a lead (without contact information, it might as well be dead air), to generate an appointment, and to create a client (hard costs, not including my time), because I keep track of those leads. TimeMatters is really good for this, actually, and I should probably start (somehow) keeping the phone info in TimeMatters, too, but TimeMatters isn't great for tracking incidental contacts.

Believe me when I tell you, it costs far more to create a client than you think it does. It's different for every practice, and those numbers should inform your client acquisition process, your marketing budget, and your marketing choices. But unless you track this information in a form useable to you, you can't tell what you should do more of, and what less.

Becki Fahle

Trade shows? Lead generation postcards? Conversions to seminars? All very progressive marketing techniques. Would you remind us what your niche is? And perhaps tell us more about your marketing system? Benjamin W. Glass, III, Fairfax, VA 22003

FWIW, remember, YMMV. Personally, I have found the single best lead generator for me is newspaper ads. But.

I can run the exact same ad in one paper, and it generates tons of leads- and a high conversion factor, near 100%. At least in my experience, drafting wills, the major hurdle is getting someone to inquire about wills; a lot of people have 'will-itis' where they think that if they do their will today they will die tomorrow. If they pickup the phone and call for a price quote on a will, they will set an appointment nearly 100% of the time, they will almost always come in and wind up executing the will. I can run the exact same ad in a different paper, and it will generate zero leads. Point is, this is a trial and error sort of thing; try running ads in a paper; if it doesn't work, try another paper or try another marketing method. Or, try a different ad.

Ronald A. Jones, Florida

Some years ago, I quite accidentally built a nationally well-regarded boutique litigation practice. I say accidentally, because looking back I accidentally did all the right things, in the right order, at the right time, to build a decent practice. But I didn't keep doing them, because I had done them on accident in the first place, didn't realize I had done them, and didn't know the first thing about replication of effort. It was a case of luck, an idiot savant marketer, which is so rare in the legal profession as to have a special name: "rainmaker."

The practice eventually imploded, primarily because early in my career, I thought clients were brought by the stork.

I knew nothing about marketing. 'Cause after all, if there was a logical intelligent way to get clients, surely they would have mentioned it in law school, when you asked "Professor, where do clients come from?" But no, they shrouded it in mystery ("if you're a good enough attorney, you'll get clients"), and made rules that only people with a license could be privy to the process (like marriage used to be). Referred to it as "art," and lied to us: "If you build it, they will come."

See? Clients appear, as if by magic, brought by the stork.

Well, actually, by the time the practice actually imploded, I knew quite a bit about marketing. But it was a classic case of too little, too late. I was too dependent on one client, both for referrals and business (I had recognized this early, but was so busy at first I didn't have the time to learn how to fix it).

There was nothing in the development pipeline, and I realized that too late. It takes *time* to acquire new complex litigation clients. To develop the relationships with the buyers. To get past the budget process. To let them find you via television interviews and trade magazine articles. To actively look for them (which never ever occurred to me, to pick up the bloody phone). And I didn't have enough time left. The one client became insolvent, and "boom." Plus, I was at that point burned out on litigation, so I didn't have the heart to do it, either.

I had a few small litigation clients still paying the bills. So, while picking up the detritus from the implosion, I decided to develop an office-based consumer practice (for which, of course, I had little experience). I diddled around a little, but one thing building a small boutique litigation practice did teach me was the power of focus. (The other thing it taught me was practice management, so by this time I was very good at creating systems).

I chose estate planning, because I think it's going to grow. It was my first really organized shot at marketing, wherein I actually kept track of what I did, how much it costs, etc. I decided to track *everything* this time around, rather than guess. I haven't done so well as I liked at tracking, but I've tracked most everything. I've done several different things, keeping in mind that each practice is different:

1. Trade shows--I marketed at the local Senior's show. I gathered leads (offering a door prize), and sent them a newsletter. This was marginally profitable. I later determined that instead of sending a newsletter, I should have tried to convert to a seminar. I also determined that income wise, the attendants at this particular show did not really meet my goals. Because of the paucity of results, and my decision not to use the same show again, I could not give you reliable conversion ratios for this.

I had previously gone to industry trade shows as an attendee, not as an exhibitor. If you are actively pressing the flesh, as attendee is more cost-effective, probably, so long as you have a way to collect contact info. Won't work in the consumer context, though, there you *need* a booth.

2. Lead generation post cards and ads--not enough generation to merit repeating. The leads generated never did become clients either, so it was a complete bust. With more experience, I would have tried to convert these leads to a seminar, which might have increased conversion to appointments, and thence to clients.

3. Lead generation YP ads--people call because of the offer for information, but the conversion to appointment rather than getting info is *extraordinarily* high. Most people who kept the appointment converted to client. However, I did not find it profitable, as a) not that many people called; and b) the ads are expensive, even when small. So, the cost per client acquired was about break even.

3a. Lead generation from YP Internet. This was VERY cost effective. My profit from the phone ads came from there. Only one or two calls per month, but they converted to appointments and profitable clients, at an additional cost of about \$6 a month.

4. Seminars advertised via direct mail do very well. Unfortunately, the cost per client created is between \$95 and \$130 each, in advance, not including your time, and it is entirely possible to put on a well-received seminar and not convert a single prospect to appointment. It's also possible not to get a single attendee (sadly) or even worse, to fill a seminar with unqualified people. Seminars advertised in flyers did not pull at all. Seminars without follow-up are, of course, a waste of your money.

Seminars became the mainstay of my business. I could reliably predict how many people would come. I could very reliably predict cost. I could (pretty reliably) predict conversion, and was getting better. I could reliably predict how much of my time it would take. I had not yet gotten to the point where I could reliably predict which seminars would not work at all because it was the wrong time of year, but July was horrible last year. :-)

5. Contacts with nursing home administrators will bring in guardianship business. It is profitable, but sporadic. I'm all about predictability.

6. Having clients bring their own witnesses is very cost effective. Not only do you save yourself paying the witness, the witness sees you in action, and fairly predictably wants to use you as well (about 1 in 2). Plus, they have a clearer understanding of why you are "so expensive."

Darrell Stewart uses this method of marketing almost exclusively--his commercial clients are usually people who were first on the other side of the table from him in a negotiation. The problem with this approach in the estate planning business is that many clients don't *know* anyone not related to them or otherwise in their will, or don't want to ask their friends.

7. Speaking in front of consumers--very profitable, almost no expense beyond your time. The problem is gathering the names (because it isn't a "contact" unless you actually have the contact information and can keep in contact). I have found you get 2-3 appointments; 1 or two clients per speaking engagement. You can use the same speech, over and over and over again, so your time investment is small and amortizable.

8. Speaking/networking with attorneys who don't do this kind of law--works very well for guardianship law

with any attorneys, and for estate law with criminal attorneys.

9. Newsletters--not a good conversion tool for consumers. I found, over time, that I was better served by regularly mailing a postcard for a seminar to the generated leads, rather than a newsletter. Once I started doing this, some of the people on my mailing list started converting. Newsletters to professionals in the business--different story, I would get one or two referrals per month because of the newsletters, usually from nursing homes.

9. As a general rule, I found consumer practice to be much more demanding than commercial work. It requires more handholding, a continuous flow of new clientele (unlike commercial work, where one client may provide you hourly work for the rest of your career), and no one considers legal work to be a cost of living (unlike commercial clients, who consider legal work to be a necessary cost of doing business). The marketing expense is constant, and I don't find the marketing generally to be as natural or organic as the marketing I did for commercial work. Commercial clients often know what kinds of legal work they need, consumers have to be educated. Consumer work is also very emotional, as is the hiring decision. You probably spend as much time developing clients as you do with commercial clients, only it's with multiple files, rather than one.

Becki Fahle 9In full disclosure, I should point out that I had a death in the family over the holidays. Because of this, I don't feel particularly comfortable doing estate planning work right now. I stopped actively marketing for the year last September, and am no longer marketing at all. When people that I have marketed to in the past call me, I am steering them to someone else. So all of this marketing information is more than six months old.)

I did give out prices in my seminars. I was never particularly convinced that this was a good idea, since the point of a seminar is to set the appointment, and if you give price, you've (presumably) caused some people who would otherwise set an appointment not to set an appointment. But I never experimented with it. At any rate, *because* I gave my prices at the seminar, people who came for an appointment had zero price resistance, they had already decided they could afford me.

Second, a *lot* of people would come to a seminar, and not do a will. Some already had an old will and chose not to re-execute. The vast majority just didn't do anything. My prices were not particularly high, but my conversion rate was nowhere near 50%, never mind 100%, of the people who showed up.

I did find that taking clients after a seminar *greatly* reduced the amount of time and explanation for a counseling session, and somewhat reduced the amount of time at the signing. so doing the seminar actually saved me time on the back end.

Becki Fahle

Others have responded with probably better ways than mine but FWIW:

I made in Word (in landscape layout, not portrait) a "Potential Clients" table with columns for Date, Name, Phone #, Referred By, Case Type, and Disposition. I use the disposition column to put things like LM, appt. date and time, referred out, didn't call back b/c I already told them I don't practice that type law when they called 2 months ago, etc.

I make an effort to ask all callers how they got my name but have found that people who found me "on the Internet" usually have no idea which site. Since I'm not paying for any Internet sites, this is OK.

Ellen Buckley, Westminster, CO 80036
