

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division
The Young Lawyer

Associate Marketing Checklist

By Larry Bodine

As a young lawyer, you've probably heard a lot about the importance of marketing. Indeed, it is essential to becoming a successful lawyer. But before you can become a rainmaker, you need to lay the groundwork. The following checklist will help you stay on track in building a client base from your first job as an associate to the day you make partner.

First-Year Associates

Your job is to excel at delivering legal services. Don't worry about originating new clients or work right now. Your short-term goal is to start building your network. Your long-term goal is to avoid being a 40-year old lawyer with no clients.

- Volunteer for assignments and ask your firm's "rainmakers" for assignments.
- Start visiting your clients in person when possible.
- Take your client contacts out for breakfast or lunch.
- Whenever you receive a business card, write three things on the back: the date, where you are, and what you talked about.
- When you return to the office, immediately create a contact record for the person in your e-mail or firm CRM system.
- Create a mailing list, and keep it updated.
- Join a bar association, and learn the law.
- Scrub your Facebook page to eliminate anything that you don't want a client or a managing partner to find.
- Go to www.Linkedin.com, and create a complete profile with a good picture.
- Send out holiday cards to those on your mailing list.
- Participate in firm functions where clients are present.

Second-Year Associates

This is the year to start building your reputation. You still shouldn't worry about originating new clients or work yet. New business comes in through relationships. Begin building business relationships now.

- Find a mentor.
- When you receive an assignment, ask how the business came to your firm.
- Get to know your colleagues in your firm. Your best business development ally may be down the hall.
- Join a committee at the bar association.
- Ask your clients what meetings *they* go to, and join them.
- Buy a box of thank-you cards and a roll of stamps. Start a habit of writing short personal notes.
- Write an article for a partner or practice group.
- Create a local listing for yourself on Google. Visit www.google.com/local/add.
- Join a group on LinkedIn.
- Read articles about marketing and business development.

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Third-Year, Fourth-Year, and Fifth-Year Associates

Now you have some experience, and it's time to differentiate yourself and to start thinking about how to bring in clients.

- Declare your major. Visualize the kind of person you'd most like to have as a client. Then reflect on the legal work that you most enjoy. Your goal is to find these ideal clients and solve their problems with legal services.
- Start thinking of yourself as the owner of a business who must bring in business for the company. Stop thinking like an employee who is a worker bee and whose career is to take assignments from others.
- Develop a 30-second commercial. Develop a concise description of yourself in terms of (1) what you do (e.g., "I'm a dealmaker," or "I settle disputes"); (2) what kind of clients you work for; and (3) what kind of problems you solve.
- Attend a seminar on business development.
- Present a custom CLE program for a client.
- Find a hot topic, and present a webinar with a partner.
- Give a speech to an audience of clients, potential clients, and referral sources.
- Write articles in industry magazines or Web sites on topics that interest your ideal clients.
- Use LinkedIn to receive introductions and request recommendations.
- Offer to be the editor of your practice area's newsletter.
- Propose to write a blog.

Sixth-, Seventh-, and Eighth-Year Associates

You are close to being promoted to partner. Now is the time to demonstrate that you can bring in business.

- It's time to write a business development plan.
- Complete this statement: "I want to be responsible for bringing in \$_____ in originating collections this year."
- List clients for which you are the handling or billing attorney. Enter dates when you will visit them at their offices.
- List everyone outside of your firm who has referred you a client or business file. Meet with each person face-to-face and set up an express referral arrangement.
- Pick one trade association and go deep. Attend all the meetings, and aim to get on the board.
- Write down a list of businesses that you would like to represent. Ask your firm marketing professional to identify the decision makers of those businesses who are in charge of hiring lawyers. Make a pointed effort to meet these target people and develop relationships with them.

To get more career tips on marketing for associates, view the full-length version of this checklist at <http://bit.ly/AKTRv>.

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