

**The**

# **Bottom Line**

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**From building client teams to utilizing competitive intelligence, law firms are evolving their marketing approaches to do better business.**



Law firm marketing departments are growing in size and sophistication. As the legal industry evolves and becomes more competitive, it is important for firms, both large and small, to differentiate themselves to their potential clients. In studying the industry, we identified four specific elements of marketing programs and examined how they can facilitate better experiences for both internal and external clients. Beyond traditional marketing elements – including Web sites, collateral materials, customer relationship management systems, events development, etc. – these are some of the most refreshing and useful concepts, all of which are intended to supplement an existing marketing infrastructure. Consider these four approaches to take your law firm’s marketing programs to the “next level.”



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### CLIENT TEAMS

Led by Kelly Brown, Director of Client Relations, Morrison & Foerster LLP recently decided to allocate resources to developing client teams. Brown, who has been building the program for the past year, emphasizes that the firm made the decision to ensure it is in the best position to help its clients.

"The Client Relations Group works with the attorneys on a client team to really understand the client – its business strategy and legal needs," Brown said. "We do this by capturing and analyzing information about the client, its industry, and its competitors, and then sharing that information with the attorneys on the team. The risk of not doing this could be that you become a transaction-by-transaction provider rather than really knowing the client in order to proactively and efficiently meet its legal needs. Our team also works across all the firm's operational departments, such as accounting and IT, to make sure we are delivering exceptional service in any way we can."

Morrison & Foerster LLP has several options when it comes to value-added offerings for clients.

"We might find a way to use our IT capabilities to assist the client, like setting up a document management extranet," Brown said. "Developing a training program to inform a client of how a new regulation may impact their business is another example."

Michael Hertz, Director of Knowledge and Business Development at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, is running a similar client team program.

"We found synergies between legal expertise and marketing, so we looked at it very closely and saw a trend where knowledge management people became more involved in business development," he said. "We decided to combine the two forces and repackage our internal efforts for the good of a client."

The Freshfields team takes its service efforts directly back to the client.

"Because each member of the knowledge and business development team tracks the time spent on projects, we're able to actually present our clients with a full picture of what we're investing in the relationship beyond the billable hour," Hertz said, noting that the firm actually creates a summary of initiatives that are performed in a non-billable capacity and presents it along with the regular bill.

These efforts also have a positive impact internally. Said Hertz: "From a management perspective, we wanted to find out where the team's time was going with regard to various projects and initiatives so that we could show the investment they were making in us was a good one."

### COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE

Monica Almendarez, a Business Development Manager at WolfBlock LLP, describes competitive intelligence (CI) as an organizational function that uses publicly available information to identify risks and opportunities in the market. While CI has been used in other industries (such as pharmaceutical) since the early 1980s, it is relatively new in law firms. "In recent legal marketing history, we have seen various CI programs tried and abandoned mostly because law firms haven't staffed the right people to do the job, Almendarez said. "There is actually a whole group of professionals who are certified to perform CI. It is important to note that these are not traditional librarians. They are skilled researchers and analysts who make judgment calls about the right information to apply to the issue at hand."

Almendarez, who has been a part of large and small CI team, maintains that "a single person isn't the solution for a true CI program. If firms are serious about CI, they should develop CI programs that are cross-departmental, including people who are researchers, analysts, business development

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professionals, and marketers. Professional and effective CI programs are proactive and are constantly scanning internal and external forces. As such, it is essential that CI professionals be clued in to the firm's strategic plan and have a seat at the table with decision-makers, so that the work of the program is in tune with the firm's short and long-term goals."

From a marketing perspective, CI can be used for basic preparation (i.e., for meeting a new prospect) or to be on the lookout for anything that could affect a client's business, so that the lawyers can bring potential issues (and solutions) to them in advance of it becoming a problem. Almindarez says many firms have also used CI to help grow practice groups by doing strategic lateral hiring. In these firms, the CI teams sought information on who was leaving which firms or where management changes were happening and how that could be good or bad for targeted practice areas. CI teams then worked to identify lawyers that could be good additions to their practices, and then gave the information to their recruiting teams, who partnered with outside agencies to lure individual attorneys or groups from their firms.

If utilized properly, CI professionals can give firms a strong competitive advantage and help them strategically grow their businesses and positively impact their bottom lines.

### **MARKETING TECHNOLOGY**

During the past few years, marketing technology teams have evolved from being strictly technology-oriented to including marketing professionals who understand how technology can be leveraged for new and expanded business prospects. Said Nancy Slome, Director of Online Marketing and Technology at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, "Like any function in a marketing department, the marketing technology team needs to ask, 'What are the drivers of the business, and how can technology support those initiatives?' When you have a large firm like

ours, it is critical to have a way to keep everything in order – from who knows whom to what deals and matters your lawyers have done. This is where technology becomes key."

A results orientation is also vital to the firm's success.

"Anything and everything we do as a marketing department has to be tied to results; this is another vital role that technology plays," Slome said. "We are able to validate expenditures by using e-mail tracking tools to see click-through rates and what people actually open when we send 'e-vites' and 'e-alerts.' We are also able to track events that we have sponsored, as well as the impending follow-ups to see if there were any results. All of these tools determine if our marketing endeavors are fruitful."

Online social networking sites are also playing increased roles in firms' marketing strategies. "Right now, we can see how LinkedIn and other social networking sites drive traffic to our site, so we have turned our attention to managing this proactively," she said.

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

After Web sites and brochures, public relations (PR) efforts represent one of most well-known elements of standard marketing platforms, but only in the past few years has PR become a core area of focus within many law firms. In-house PR professionals benefit from proximity to the firm's lawyers. They have access to information in advance of its becoming "breaking news," and where they can be under the umbrella of client confidentiality.

"In-house PR professionals offer the opportunity to closely integrate plans with others in the marketing and business development functions," said Joshua Peck, Senior Media Relations Manager at Duane Morris LLP. "It also facilitates a level of understanding that isn't available to outside sources."

The targets of a PR program are broad: media, clients, prospective



clients, firm lawyers and staff, laterals, and prospective recruits. The subjects that the PR team addresses and publicizes are even broader: firm successes in court and corporate boardrooms, pro bono activity, diversity, work/life balance, and green initiatives, to name just a few.

Ultimately, the results of an integrated PR program inside a law firm are different than the results often found inside an agency – it is not just about how many hits you get.

“A positive placement in the *Wall Street Journal* is generally considered the ultimate, but a placement in a targeted trade publication could do just as much good,” Peck said. “We use a variety of technology tools – including LexisNexis, Westlaw, and Google – so that we know where we’ve been covered in the media.”

But media relations is just one part of the job. PR professionals in the best integrated marketing departments work closely with individual in other divisions to help shape and craft the outbound messages and to analyze the appropriate channels in which to send them. They are business advisers who work with recruiting professionals to craft messages to law students, with senior managers to refine internal messages, and with other key stakeholders to ensure all external messages are aligned with internal messages – what some call “reading from the same script.” That, in turn, ultimately supports the firm’s bottom line.

“An in-house PR function is essential as a critical part of the overall marketing mix,” Peck said. “Good results with the media are palpably connected to firm profits.”

#### **CUTTING-EDGE THINKING**

In an industry that used to rely on “it’s-who-you-know” marketing and golf outings, marketing programs inside law firms are becoming increasingly sophisticated. The increased resources being put toward these initiatives are truly adding value and contributing to the bottom lines of many firms. \*

#### *about the author*

**Jennifer Johnson** is Vice President of Recruitment & Strategy at Wisnik Career Enterprises Inc. Her practice focuses on placing marketing professionals in law firms. Contact her at (212) 370-1010 or [marketing@wisnik.com](mailto:marketing@wisnik.com).

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