



Précis Paper

Marketing in Law Firms (part 2)

Rob is one of the most experienced advisors on practice management in Australia and New Zealand. For part one you can view the following link: <https://vimeo.com/156506902>

Discussion Includes

- Marketing and advertising
- Websites, online videos, blogs and newsletters
- Dealing with negative online feedback
- Marketing to current clients
- Data bases and recording information
- Email and online marketing
- Training
- Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram

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Marketing in Law Firms (part 2)

1. In this edition of BenchTV, Rob Knowsley, principal legal practice management consultant at Knowsley Management Services (KMS), is interviewed by Louise Blasé on the topic of marketing in law firms. The discussion of this topic is continued from the video [Marketing in Law Firms \(Part 1\)](#).

The Difference between Marketing and Advertising

2. Advertising is simply a part of the marketing process, if it is appropriate for a particular organisation. Marketing is about getting useful information in the hand of clients and prospective clients, to position the firm as being capable in those areas, so that the firm might later receive inquiries or referrals. Advertising is usually much more directed in getting people to make inquiries on a particular topic. In some areas, advertising is not particularly effective but in other areas it can be.

Use of Video Content

3. A video that helps the site visitor to get a better feel for the approach and client attitude of the firm can help brand a firm. On the other hand, there are also several videos, including animations, with the purpose of conveying information in an easily digestible very user-friendly manner. Knowsley believes it is important to keep such videos short (under a minute) and make it visible to the site viewer that it is a very short video so that they are more likely to commit to watching.

Feedback from Websites

4. Firms should ask for feedback from their website viewers and also publish analysis of that feedback on their websites. However, firms need to be very careful of being balanced and not being intrusive into viewer's time. Online boards which ask clients to give feedback should be balanced, easy to use, and thank clients for comments. Firms should be responsive to comments as often a person who has made a criticism can turn into a very positive advocate for a practice by the response they get to their criticism. A critical comment should not be ignored or bring out aggression in the firm. Negative feedback should be seen as a very positive thing for the firm to address and improve.
5. On a website, since viewers do not stay for long, the feedback likely to be received is probably only going to be small, for example a rank of the usefulness of certain information:

very good, adequate, inadequate with a small comment box. It is unlikely for firms to get significant or substantial feedback on websites.

Client Feedback

6. There should be in-firm assessment of client matters. Over and above that, Knowsley believes it is well worth making a follow phone call in an interval of a couple of weeks to see whether a client's experience was fully positive and to seek information about how the services could be further improved and any general comments that clients might want to make. The firm should assess that information and react to it as it comes in. Sometimes Knowsley observes an eagerness in firms to get a job done and then move onto the next job and perhaps to hope that the client was happy because no one had heard anything. That is an assumption that should not be made, as sometimes clients do not initially wish to come forth with critiques but if presented with an opportunity by being phoned by someone appropriate in the firm and being asked about the experience, they may be forthcoming. If a client does not have any comments, it should just be a case of thanking them for their time and looking forward to being able to assist them in the future.
7. One of the big questions to ask is whether the client could see any impediment to recommending other people to the firm. Generally, one would get a very positive answer or a hesitant answer which can be taken as a no, and you can ask why that is the case.

Marketing to Current Clients

8. Knowsley believes that current clients are 'underdone' in relation to marketing. Marketing can be perceived as the opportunity to drive new clients into the practice and there can be a natural reluctance to do it.
9. For seminars, on average 50% of the audience have been to a seminar before, very often on the same sort of topic. It is a big mistake to exclude current clients from information.
10. Current clients are a big part of the practice and are very good referrers so it is important to know their businesses and interests in order to target them with relevant information.

Referral

11. When a current client refers a new client, there is a potential issue of confidentiality. Knowsley would suggest that a firm asks the referrer whether they are comfortable for the firm to mention they are a client to the referred person/organisation. Most of the time they will be comfortable with it, but if not that should be brought to the attention of everyone working on the file.

12. It is most important to keep track of referrals and to do or give something thoughtful to the referrer. A database should be used to track referrals and record the flow of revenues that have arisen from each referral. The database can then be used to determine whether a particular marketing activity is useful or not by looking at the number of referrals and their associated revenues that have arisen from the marketing.

How to Market to Current Clients

13. This should depend on the demographics of the client base. Most firms have quite a varied client base, so the type of information and the way it is delivered should also vary. For example, a marketing strategy might be morning breakfast seminars throughout the year coupled with targeted email.
14. One of the traps in marketing is trying to send all firm information to all the people in a database. It is highly unlikely that all information will be really relevant to all people, and thus a firm risks watering down its credibility and threatens the readership of future material. Emails should be targeted to certain clients by using a database to specify a group with whom the information is directly relevant. This process can be harder and more time consuming for large practices which might have particular policies regulating the marketing process.
15. It is important to keep information fresh on websites, blogs and LinkedIn. It is important that people stay aware of your relevance in their life and their businesses. Knowsley refers to research that says that if you are not on someone's radar within 90 days, you start to drop off their radar at a very steep rate. It is not necessary to have direct contact, indirect marketing contact could take the form of a comment about the firm on LinkedIn, or an interview on television or a mention as a speaker of a conference.

Analytics for Online Marketing

16. Information received on open rates of emails can be a bit suspect. It is thus important to get good technical advice in that area. Another useful tool is providing response mechanisms within the communication. Knowsley often provides offers of helpful things in outbound communication so that when people click on that link and ask for the free item, the firm can identify where the reader was in the informational piece when they responded. For example, if a firm sent out a newsletter with 4 pages, Knowsley would try to have a response mechanism on every page to determine, from take up rates of each offer, the types of readership that was received.

17. It is also possible to be informed by the number of likes and shares of material on social networks like LinkedIn.

Length of Email and Online Content

18. Length of marketing content is a common question. If the content of the information is really helpful, one can be surprised how much people are willing to read once they have committed to reading.

Unsubscriptions

19. Unsubscriptions provide useful information which helps firms improve marketing material to become more targeted. Knowsley often thanks the unsubscriber in the same email that he forwards the request to the database manager. It is then necessary for the database manager to do research as to the reason for the unsubscription. It is also smart not to delete the unsubscriber off the database, in case they are accidentally re-added later, but rather make the address inactive.
20. Knowsley's usual unsubscribe rate each mail out to more than 5000 people is about 0.1%. As long as the database system is well built and managed, firms should be having low unsubscribe rates. It may be appropriate to follow up on an unsubscription request with a phone call or email.
21. Following through with unsubscribing people from mailing lists, after a request has been made, should happen almost instantaneously. If this is not done and further marketing is sent out to the unsubscriber, this may warrant a complaint to the authorities that regulate spam in Australia.

Personalising Emails

22. Knowsley would highly recommend personalising emails with first names as it works better and shows that the firm has put effort in. There may be sensitivity in regards to salutations like Mrs, Miss, Ms and Knowsley recommends being extremely apologetic if an issue arises and ensuring that the issue is fixed for future correspondence.

Niche Marketing for Small and Medium Firms

23. Knowsley's view with smaller firms is that they should be very niched, rather than broad in their marketing. They should match the demographics of the clients and referrers with specific services that the firm knows will be valued, the firm is good at providing and can make a reasonable profit out of. There are situations however where it is valuable to get a

client on board with an introductory service such as writing a will for little or no fee in order to keep clients.

Measuring Marketing

24. Knowsley believes that the starting point is always matching the abilities and time resources of principals and staff to specific marketing. Communication is very important so staff know what it is they are meant to be doing. It is also crucial for staff to record what they are doing accurately – including firm activities beyond client time. Firms are then able to capture and track staff marketing time within sub-categories.
25. Firms need to be prepared to measure the value of marketing over a long period of time. Firms should not expect an instantaneous cause and effect for a small amount of marketing effort. Market downturns and upturns can affect the value and footprint of marketing such that more marketing may be required in a downturn.

Training of Staff in Marketing

26. Knowsley approaches training in a targeted way and does his best with everybody to lift their skill levels in such a way that they can contribute to the area that they want to. It is important to find out what staff's strengths are after the appropriate training as some will respond well to training but others might not and may require more training or need to focus their efforts in other areas.
27. Depending on the firm, training can be successfully done from the top down, if the "top" of a firm has the requisite marketing and training skills, or alternatively through external training providers.

Recording Client's Personal Information

28. Knowsley believes practitioners should make a judgement at the time they are exposed to person's information e.g. a client's son plays tennis or their daughter plays ballet, on whether to record and mention such information at the next encounter. On the one hand, people do really value when some takes a genuine interest in their interests and family and remembers them, but on the other hand these days there is more of a trend towards cynicism as people know that enormous amounts of information about them can be stored in databases. Knowsley believes it is useful to track personal information, such as what sporting teams clients follow, in order to make *genuine* personal comments at the end of a communication. However, he notes it is important not to overstep the mark.

File notes

29. After completing any type of marketing, writing what has been done in a file note is absolutely necessary. File notes should be kept electronically on a database that can be searched. Firms should be able to learn from past experiences by following a trail of marketing and seeing if it worked.

Facebook and Twitter

30. Knowsley believes the use of Facebook and Twitter for marketing depends hugely on the demographics each individual firm wants to target. Whilst Knowsley has seen successful marketing done on Facebook and Twitter, he notes that the majority of good marketing is done on LinkedIn at the moment.
31. Knowsley would suggest firms get counsel from people who know how to use Facebook and Twitter. Knowsley has seen Twitter used well to promote particular events and encourage registration, like seminars, through a burst of tweets.
32. The demographics of people that use Facebook and Twitter tends to be growing and widening. Consequently these marketing platforms have potential to be very successful in the future and should be watched.

LinkedIn

33. A poor LinkedIn profile is worse than no profile at all. For example, not having a photo demonstrates disorganisation. Marketing should be done properly so that a practitioner's image of organisation and professionalism can come through.

Instagram

34. Knowsley does not wish to advise at present on the use of Instagram by law firms, however he does comment that communication methods are constantly changing, from yellow pages to the internet, so it is possible for Instagram to be an extremely successful marketing tool in the future.

BIOGRAPHY

Rob Knowsley LLB MIMC

Legal Practice Management Consultant – Australia

Rob Knowsley has provided legal practice management advice and solutions to over 1,300 legal firms in Australasia over 42 years. He provides practical advice to address fundamental problems, and to develop successful legal firms.

Louise Blase

Bachelor of Legal and Justice Studies, Southern Cross University.