

Best Marketing Strategy for Solos...Getting Clients through Those Doors!

What's your best most effective marketing strategy?

Get any work you can on any terms--including free. Do excellent work. The word gets around. Not unusual to get referrals from prior oc.

There are lots of attorneys who want work.....only a few WANT TO WORK!

John Page, Florida

Sincerity. I find that PCs seem to really respond well to me actually taking an interest and appearing to give a cr*p.

Plus a willingness to dig through a great deal of horse s* in search of a pony.

Geoff Wiggs

What is yours?

Very truly yours,

Nick A. Ortiz, Florida

After 16 years in biglaw, and now another 16 solo, my best marketing strategy is answering the phone when it rings.

Shell Bleiweiss, Illinois

Thanks all! You know, I haven't quite nailed one yet- that's why I asked. I practice immigration law so a lot of word of mouth seems to be where i get the better part of my cases. I am getting my website done with a blog so we'll see how that works out.

Nkechi James-Gillman, Minnesota

SoloSez Popular Threads, August 2014

Do you answer your own phones? Use a receptionist? Call answering service?

Very truly yours,

Nick A. Ortiz

As a fellow immigration lawyer, have you tried free presentations on immigration issues to cultural groups/churches? In the past (in a nonprofit setting), I gave a short Immigration 101 presentation to adult literacy/ESL classes and it increased phone calls from PCs three-fold for routine family-sponsorship cases and citizenship application inquiries. I'm going to attempt it again now that I'm in private practice and hope it leads to more referrals!

Just a suggestion.

Sharon

Sharon Barney, Pennsylvania

I answer my own phone. I have that luxury with a low volume, big matter practice like environmental and OSHA. Many practices it wouldn't be practical.

Shell Bleiweiss

Who are your best natural referral sources? Other attorneys? Social workers? Start networking with those persons. Instead of asking them to SEND you work, talk about your approach to what you do and ask them how you can HELP them help their clients. Offer to be a person who can help them solve their issues. You're not so much providing legal advice as pointing them in the right direction. As a lawyer, you know something about how a judge might see a hypothetical issue, or be able to tell them that they need to make a referral to an immigration (or other) attorney ASAP, or some other bit of information where it becomes clear that you are THE expert that their clients need when your type of services are required.

Sasha Golden, Massachusetts

SoloSez Popular Threads, August 2014

I'd focus as much attention as possible on a website and getting positive client reviews. In one year of adding content and working on SEO I have put my website at the top of google organic search results and we get about 15 clients a month from organic searches (not pay-per-click).

Very truly yours,

Nick A. Ortiz

Nick that's amazing 15 clients a month. ..180 clients a year. That's impressive.

gilbert valdes alba, Florida

Ok, well, personally, my best marketing strategy is not charging the client to hold a sales meeting with them. I get initial contact with potential client, whether phone call or walk in, determine if it's an area that I practice in; if it's not, then I'll make a referral out (Family law, Criminal law, sorry, I don't do that but you might want to call so and so at this number); determine whether it's something that, even if I DO practice in the area is something that I'm not going to make any money on (Eviction? You landlord or tenant? Tenant? Why you being evicted? Nonpayment of rent? You haven't worked in 2 months and got no \$, I'm sorry, I just don't see how you would pay my bill, but call Legal Aid at this number); and if I decide I'm potentially interested in the case and can make money off of it, I'll have the client come in and see if I can sell them my services.

Sometimes, I can't; sometimes, they don't need my services; they got an older, but still perfectly valid will; I'll spend a couple of minutes with them and tell them they don't need a 'new' will; or in the case of a probate, it'll turn out all the assets pass outside of probate, typically as Joint Tenancy or TBE or as Pay on Death Designation; I'll tell them what they need to do (take death certificate to all the banks, down to DMV, get decedents name taken off accounts and car title, take and record death certificate at Courthouse, and this is how you get there) and wave bye-bye. Takes maybe 10 minutes or so. OTOH, IF they do need a new will, or need a probate, I'll start selling them on my services; this is what needs to be done, this is filing fee, this is about what it will cost, this is how long it should take, roughly, and do you want to hire me? If you do , I'll need \$X up front.

Whatever it is. I don't spend massive time analyzing the case, at least not initially. I get an overview, a sense of whether I can help them and whether I can help them on a cost efficient basis. Depends on the facts; a Will contest over a rural lot and a 30 year old mobile home that is worth \$12,000; and even if they win on the contest they're going to get 1/6 of it? I'm sorry, Ma'am, I'm going to have to charge you a LOT more money, all of it up front, than your potential \$2,000 interest in the property if you win. \$600,000 estate? And you potentially get half of it? Um, let's talk a bit more about this and see what the facts are. If you want to pay me on an hourly basis it's going to be \$X for retainer; but I think this is a reasonably strong case and I might be willing to do it on contingency at X percentage of recovery. Lets take a closer look at this.

SoloSez Popular Threads, August 2014

If it becomes apparent that the case isn't "worth it" to me, I politely end the interview. IF it becomes apparent that the client is a 'tire kicker' and isn't going to hire me, I end the interview. But in a lot of cases, people are on the fence, they honestly don't know how this stuff works, they don't know the law or their rights or the procedures and in some cases I can SELL them my services. It takes practice; and some people, while WONDERFUL lawyers, simply can't close a deal to save their lives. Or they spend WAY too much time on trying to sell something to someone who isn't going to buy; there's an art to recognizing when you aren't going to close a sale; you are under NO obligation to continue to waste your time on a sale that isn't going to happen.

From the client's perspective, they'd rather go to a lawyer who isn't going to charge them for the sales meeting; your husband just died, you're confused, you don't know what to do next, whether you need a probate or what's involved, and you call up one lawyer and they want \$50 or \$200 or whatever to meet with you; you call up Ronald Jones and he says "I'm really sorry about your loss, Ma'am, why'nt you come on down and bring the paperwork and we'll talk about it. No, No charge, Ma'am, I offer Free Consultations on Probate Matters, if I can help you I'll give you an estimate after we talk, if I can't help you or if you don't need my services, I'll tell you that and won't charge you for the meeting". Who you going to meet with? Lawyer who charges to meet with you or lawyer who doesn't charge for sales meeting? I call it a "Free Consultation" but it's a sales meeting, pure and simple. And if I'm not going to make the sale, I end the meeting.

It works for me. It doesn't always work for every lawyer; some lawyers charge for sales meetings. That's fine; by charging for sales meeting you are 'pre qualifying' the client; if they have money and are willing to spend their money to meet with you then that's decent sign that they're likely to hire you; but of course, you're missing out on potential clients who MAY be able to be sold your services IF you have the skill to actually SELL them your services. But that takes a certain degree of skill, and you need to recognize that not every person is going to be able to be sold on your services. If you got, say, a 50% chance of selling someone your services, and you actually sell them, obviously, that meeting is not a 'waste of your time'; if you don't sell them, was that a waste of your time or not? I don't know. Personally, I don't think so, but I tend to take a more holistic view of these things; even if I didn't sell them something at that meeting, they may 1) refer other, potentially paying clients to me or 2) they may come back with a different legal problem where I can sell them my services. But not everyone sees it like that.

As people like to point out, Lincoln said something to the effect that "A lawyers time and his advice are his stock in trade". That's absolutely true; however time that is unsold expires; you can't 'bank' the time or put in in 'inventory'. Sometimes you have to 'give away' a little bit of your stock in trade to get people to buy from your inventory; that's why supermarkets give away free samples; to get people to buy the inventory. I understand; this isn't going to work for all lawyers and it certainly isn't going to work for all practice areas; but for certain practice areas (particularly those that the potential client really can't effectively represent themselves in) it can be very useful.

Ronald Jones, Florida

SoloSez Popular Threads, August 2014

I have a receptionist and a legal assistant who usually grab the phones. But I answer if I'm wandering by and they look busy. They prefer that I don't answer the phone, as I get caught up in chatting and usually won't bill for the conversation. So for me, the receptionist represents cost savings. She also insists that potential clients have to set a specific time to speak with me over the phone or in person and she gets their credit card info, often taking the money before I even talk with people and beeping in when I talk longer than prearranged. She's much better at asking for money than I am.

However, I think an answering service works for many and even more, answering their own phone works, depending upon the type of practice. I KNOW I have a bad habit of talking too much, too long, and giving away free advice. Again, the receptionist saves me from myself. I'm trying to get over this and other character flaws I have, but knowing yourself is an important component to any business decision. For me, staff is mandatory and cost effective, but that isn't true for everyone!

Vicki Levy Eskin, Florida

Make a list of everything a prospective client would want to know before they hire you. Include the process, the cost, the expected outcomes, etc. Make videos and/or other materials that answer every one of those questions in the most helpful manner possible.

They should be able to watch the videos and decide whether or not they want to hire you - before they ever meet you.

Cheers,

David Allen Hiersekorn, California

When the phone rings I answer it regardless of who else is at the office. My name is on the door and when people call they expect and deserve to talk to me (although some are sometimes surprised that I actually pick up the phone).

Best marketing strategy for me has been satisfying clients. Word-of-mouth is very powerful and has been keeping my little office very busy. Another good strategy is doing pro bono work. I know it's counter intuitive, but I've had a few great referrals from pro bono clients. Such clients often feel that they "owe" you (although they really don't) and are often happy to tell everyone they know about you.

Another great source of business is from community involvement and getting to know local peers. If you invest a little time into helping out your community, even speaking at a local school or business, the phone will start ringing. Getting to know your peers at local bar associations and other events will also help as I often refer cases to other attorneys and they refer to cases to me. Good attorneys seem to enjoy helping each other out.

Thank you,

Elliott Malone, New Jersey
