

# Popular Threads on Solosez

## Church Bulletin Advertising

I want to use my marketing budget wisely, so I'd like to get some advice from the group on church bulletin advertising.

I'm considering placing ads in the weekly bulletins of two local churches. I was recently offered a pretty good deal -- two churches for the price of one. However, I'm hesitant to place an ad because I would be required to run it for a year. The total cost is not too bad -- \$12/week for a total of \$624.00. I'm just worried that I'll commit to a year and not get a single client from the ad. I would advertise the following services: wills, bankruptcy and municipal court defense. I may also offer free consultations to those who mention the ad.

These bulletins are newsletters that people can pick up on their way out of church. The back of the bulletin is reserved for ads placed by local merchants and professionals.

I found a thread on this topic in the archives, but it is from 2005. If possible, I'd like to hear about more recent experiences with this type of advertising. Thanks.

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I would spend that money building your web presence.

Leanna Hamill, Massachusetts

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I would spend the money.

Many clients over the years will only hire a lawyer of their faith or from their church. As far as the "free" stuff. I wouldn't. It looks like you are hungry for business. I used to give away wills if the church was a beneficiary. The minister was sending people to another lawyer. You might not get rich, but the ad will pay for itself and you are helping your church..

(My opinion)

Jay Foonberg, California

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I don't advertise in the church directory. Of course, our congregation is about 250 active members, and many of them knew me way way before I finished my undergrad, let alone my JD. So I wouldn't need to anyway.

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Perhaps a dozen people have approached me about their dissolutions, custody problems, etc. At first I was flattered. Then I agreed to have a consult with one or two. Then I represented one or two.

I doubt I'll do it again. Before we start talking, I ask them if they've considered the kinds of things I will end up knowing about them and their family. Maybe they'd be more comfortable now, and especially when the case is over, if the person who holds all that knowledge in his/her head is a stranger they're not likely to encounter again. Otherwise, they're either going to see me Sunday and think, "Lordy, when she looks at me she remembers That Thing I had to tell her." Or they leave the church. Neither is good.

And then there's the quick question they want to ask you as you're leaving church. Or the arguments they had with the other person yesterday and want to tell you about it right there in the aisle. The holy glow vanishes

so fast your hair blows back. And then, do you bill for that time? Well, sure. So you get a query about billing them for a simple chat on Sunday. Lucky you don't charge double for the nonoffice consult. Lucky you don't charge triple for it being a day of rest.

You can still serve your friends by offering do do a clinic one evening, with the understanding that you do not represent church members, which gives them the idea it's not a solicitation but a free information opportunity. General information, if you need more, hire an attorney.

Explaining Parenting Schedules and How To Create One In Your Child's Best Interest. Avoid the legal questions by letting them know that no personal scenarios are allowed.

Why You Need A Will  
Your Right To Privacy

CJ Stevens, Montana

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I think church bulletins have the potential for bringing in clients. But I would \*only\* place an ad there if you really wanted to support the church. It would probably be most beneficial to have an ad in your own church's bulletin (and note "parishioner" or "member" or whatever in the ad copy).

With all that said, we found our realtor through the church bulletin. We typically glance at the ads just out of curiosity. We remembered that there was a realtor on there. When we wanted to get a house, we looked for her ad and called. (That first attempt at a house fell through, but we will be using her when we try again.)

I've spoken with another guy at our church who advertises on the bulletin. I think he told me that a couple people have called him, mentioning the ad. But I remember him saying one lady actually met him somewhere and then just used the bulletin as a handy way to find his phone number.

In my opinion, if your marketing budget is really tight, there are better places to spend the money. \$624 could put up a decent website.

Andrew Flusche, Virginia

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I've never done church bulletin advertising, per se: we've got 3 pages of ads in our church bulletin, it's fairly pricey, and as noted, you need a 1 year contract.

Now, I DID advertise for years in The Florida Catholic; distributed in every parish church in the state, and at the time, it was pretty reasonably priced, like \$180/year for exposure in one issue a month, which worked out to \$15/month and it generated at least a few clients; but then they jacked up their pricing and I figured it was no longer worth it.

Ronald Jones, Florida

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Just a thought here, for what its worth... I can't imagine advertising to a church crowd without being up to date on church related law, ie: freedom of speech, religion and that sort of thing. Having said that, I would look into going to the National Litigation Academy hosted by the Alliance Defense Fund. That way, you are up to date with church related issues and can work those as well as the normal day to day cases you are probably advertising for.

- Zale Dowlen, Tennessee

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There is a potential tax issue for churches here. Doing advertising seems to be a fairly ubiquitous practice among churches that either publish ads on their bulletins or websites. Tax-exempt nonprofit organizations are subject to tax on income from unrelated business. Advertising income (as opposed to sponsorship) is considered unrelated business income and subject to the unrelated business income tax (UBIT). If a nonprofit has more than \$1000 in unrelated taxable income, it must report the income and pay the tax. This includes churches, who are normally exempt from filing tax returns. Advertising includes statements that promote specific business products or services. Sponsorship is limited to a statement of who donated to the organization, but it may include the name, business and contact information without crossing over into advertising. If you do represent a church or sit on a church board, you might want to point this out. While it might not ever be challenged by the IRS or state tax authorities, would they want to be the test case?

Patrick Sternal, California

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Here in Chicago I advertised in the bulletin of my parish. Not only was mine way more expensive (\$120 per month for a year!) - I got NOTHING. Many people I know who have tried have had the same experience. Sure I got some calls from older folks but when they found out that I wasn't doing legal work for free hung up on me (really) - what a waste of money on my part. Now, if the money had somehow benefited the parish rather than the advertising company, I'd be at peace with it. Long story short - in Chicago, this is not worth your money. In NJ, it might be a different story.... GOOD LUCK!

Tatiana D. Czaplicki, Illinois

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I agree with Tatiana. I had the exact same experience. Not worth it.

Ysabel Williams, Pennsylvania

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I've never gotten anything from church bulletins - and I found them to be quite expensive. I assumed that if I attended there, it might be different. But from some of the comments, I guess not.

David A. Rubin, Missouri

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I agree with all that has been written on this thread so far. My first year out, I advertised in two synagogue bulletins. Not one bite. Along with the Yellow Pages, I did not renew either bulletin for '09.

Jeena R. Belil, New York

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I ran an ad in a local church bulletin (weekly program that is given out each Sunday) for 2007-2008. The ad offered a 10% discount on estate planning if they mentioned the ad. Never received a single client that I could attribute to the ad so I did not renew for 08-09.

Peter Clark, Massachusetts