

Marketing during the Busy Season

By Larry Bodine, Esq. of Glen Ellyn, (Chicago) IL. He is a business developer with 20 years experience who helps law firms attract and keep more clients. He can be reached at 630.942.0977 and LBodine@LawMarketing.com. For more information visit www.LarryBodine.com.



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Every lawyer knows what it's like during busy times—there is client work to be done and a billable hour target to be met. The mantra is “make hay while the sun shines.” Nothing else gets in the way, certainly not marketing.

That's a big mistake. It's like deciding to dump the jet fuel because the plane is already traveling at 500 miles per hour.

Speaking as a business owner myself, I understand the pressure. You've got to do the work when it's there. Clients come first. You must stay laser-focused to do your very best work because you're only as good as the last project you did.

Yes. All of this is true, but you still need to market. Lawyers are business owners. We have an obligation to do the work and also to bring it in. You must generate new business or else you'll come to the end of your to-do list, which is when you're out of business.

Here are some tips to try during the busy season to make sure that you also have work during the droughts:

- Open your calendar until you find a month with open dates; make marketing appointments on those dates.
- Continue to attend internal marketing meetings; they may be concise, but don't allow gaps in your attendance. This will keep you focused.
- Stay active in the trade and business associations you've joined. It's no good if you skip meetings; being there is 90% of marketing.
- Turn every out-of-town trip into a marketing call. See your client but also make plans to see a couple of prospects.
- Accept speaking engagements when they're offered. Typically the invitation comes many months ahead. Just say “yes,” and write it on your calendar.
- Use every minute because each one counts. Make marketing appointments by cell phone in a cab; use your Blackberry to pitch articles to editors and reporters; write articles for publication while you're on a plane; and take along client trade

publications to read in your hotel room.

- Blend your business life into your social life. There are only so many hours in a day, so when you have lunch, invite a client along. When you go to an event, take a prospect with you.

As David Maister said, "What you do with your billable time determines your current income, but what you do with your non-billable time determines your future."

For more on this topic, call:
Larry Bodine, Esq.
Business Development Advisor
Tel: 630.942.0977
E-mail: Lbodine@LawMarketing.com
Web: <http://www.LarryBodine.com>

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