

91% of Lawyers Unhappy about Lack of Marketing Training in Law School

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Larry Bodine

More than 9 out of 10 lawyers are deeply unhappy with the lack of marketing training in law school, according to new research conducted in July 2007.

The responses were overwhelming and many lawyers even took the time to make pointed comments. We want to first thank everyone who participated.

The participants were a broad cross-section of practicing attorneys. 77% are partners and 48% practice at firms with 100 or more lawyers. But the most telling statistic is that 91% of attorneys feel that their law schools prepared them poorly, inadequately, or not at all, for desperately needed real world legal marketing.

The only conclusion we can draw is that after law school, most lawyers, to use a Nixon-era phrase, are left twisting slowly in the wind. Some have been fortunate to find marketing mentors after graduation, and 61% have taken a post-graduate course or training session in marketing. Nevertheless,

- 41% don't get good marketing results, don't know how to market or don't bother to do any marketing at all.
- 37% manage to just generate enough business for themselves.
- Only 22% of respondents consider themselves rainmakers.

In the Darwinian legal world, this does not auger well for survival.

Verbatim comments from lawyers

Many lawyers left trenchant, acerbic and articulate opinions about the legal marketing experience. Some left their names, others did not. Here is a selection of their verbatim comments:

"Law schools in my opinion do not train you at all to work for yourself. They seem to be totally geared towards working at a firm and help keep the whole marketing thing a mystery left to top level partners. I love my law school, but this is a definite problem which I suspect is true of most law schools," said Mark David, Torche, Patwrite LLC, Marshalltown, IA.

"I'm a good rainmaker, but I haven't been able to create storms, and today, to survive and be profitable, a firm needs storms. Hell, we need hurricanes," said Vic Fusco, Fusco, Brandenstein & Rada, P.C., Woodbury, NY.

"[Marketing] should be an essential course at law school and part of the continuing legal education requirements as there are elements to good marketing (such as great service) that will undoubtedly reduce claims against lawyers as well," said Diane Evans, Marin, Evans LLP, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

"It is a skill set which law school nor even in-house firm training did not prepare me for. There are many tricks you learn over time as to improve your marketing among current clients as well as prospective clients," said one lawyer.

"I suspect that some of my law school professors would have considered it beneath contempt to teach marketing; it would have been too close to an acknowledgement that practicing law actually involves running a business," said another lawyer.

"Any help on getting young associates to understand the importance of marketing and getting them interested in marketing would be very helpful."

"Yes -- Learning about lawyer marketing takes a fundamentally different set of mental and emotional capabilities than does learning about the law. It would be a fallacy to assume that simply because one can grasp thorny legal principles, one therefore can truly understand the ins and outs of legal marketing. And then putting them into practice is a wholly different venture altogether," said David Abeshouse, Law Office of David J. Abeshouse, Uniondale, NY.

"Some have [marketing skills], some do not, but if you do not you better try to learn to how to make it happen and keep trying until you find your best avenue to get business."

"Contrary to the old guard position, market or perish," said Christopher Barber, Barber Law Firm, Bellaire, TX.

"Once prospects have heard you speak, read your trade association magazine or newsletter articles or have seen your book (treatise published by West) they believe that you are an expert, true or not. After that the sale becomes fairly simple."

"[I learned] by observing successful lawyers and the techniques that they use. I also have learned through trial and error," Robert Freedman, Cowan DeBaets Abrahams & Sheppard, New York, NY.

"[A lawyer] must start early in the practice. When I began practicing law, it was at a time when, and at a large firm where bringing in clients was not only unnecessary, but discouraged. Obviously things have since changed."