

## Grow Your Practice Series:

December 2006

### 101 Ways to Effectively Market Your Law Firm

#### No. 23: Make the Yellow Pages Work for Your Practice

The **Yellow Pages** have been around for over 100 years, and they still work today. There are a few things you can do to make sure they really pay off for your practice.

First of all, understand that “**Yellow Pages**” has become a generic term. Before the break-up of Ma Bell in the 1980s, **AT&T** was *THE* national publisher of *THE Yellow Pages*. They were a monopoly with no competition, and in those pre-Internet days, their advertising slogan was “Let your fingers do the walking.”



In today's unregulated world, many markets have multiple directories. In New York City, for example, there is still an official **Yellow Pages** (published by **Verizon**, the merged entity of the two of the companies broken off from **AT&T** 20 years ago). There is also the **Yellow Book**, and it is giving the **Yellow Pages** a run for its money. Then there is the **Ambassador Yellow Pages** published by yet a third company. It looks like deregulation worked, because at least in directory advertising, there is lots of competition!

**When There Is More than One “Yellow Pages” in Your Market Area, in Which One Should You Advertise?** If there is just one **Yellow Pages** in your area, that is not an issue. You advertise in the one book that serves your area.

If, however, there are competing **Yellow Pages** serving your area, here is what you do NOT want to do. Do NOT ask the sales reps from each of the competing **Yellow Pages** where you should advertise, because each one of them will inundate you with readership studies showing that (guess what?) his **Yellow Pages** is, indeed, the one that everybody uses!



Complete Local Yellow Pages Nationwide

**You Have to Test Each One:** The Bad News is that there is really no alternative but to test each **Yellow Pages** for its effectiveness, and that process will take several months. The Good News is that there is a cost-effective way to 100% test each book's effectiveness:

- ◆ **Order Several Toll-Free Numbers:** Order several toll-free (877 or 866) telephone numbers from your long distance provider. Most long distance vendors charge a small fee (usually around \$5.00) to set up each toll-free number, and you then only pay for calls to that number.
- ◆ **Put a Different Toll-Free Number in Each Book:** When you design your ads, put a different toll-free number in each. Make sure that a unique toll-free number appears in each ad, and nowhere else, and do NOT put that number on your letterhead or business cards. Make sure that only readers of your ad in each **Yellow Pages** sees that toll-free number.
- ◆ **Check Your Toll-Free Bill Each Month:** Once your new ad with its unique toll-free number comes out, review the monthly bill from your long distance provider. It will show not only the number of calls to that number, but the number from which each call was made, the time of the call and its duration. *Talk about valuable marketing intelligence!*
- ◆ **A Wealth of Valuable Marketing Data:** Not only can you now measure each book by the number of calls it produces, you can also look at the area codes and exchanges to see where the calls are coming from. Also look at the length of the calls. The longer each call, the more qualified was the inquiry that book produced!
- ◆ **What Will You Learn?** Once all the new books with your new coded ads appear, you can track on a monthly basis exactly how many leads each book produces, and you can do so in a very affordable, totally passive, and completely non-arbitrary method. When it comes time to renew your ad, you have totally reliable data with which to make a decision about renewing your ad, not running again in next year's book, increasing the size of your ad, or possibly running additional ads under additional headings.

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- ◆ **Why Have a Toll-Free Number for What Will Be Largely Local Calls?** Two reasons. First, you cannot track incoming calls to a local number. Your local telephone bill only shows outbound calls. You have to be paying for the call to track it, so the 15 or 20 cents these incoming calls will cost you is cheap considering the market intelligence they will produce for you. Second, research has shown that prospects are far more likely to call a toll-free number than a local number, even if the local number is a free call.
- ◆ **Consider Setting Up Vanity Toll-Free Numbers:** Everyone knows the toll-free number for Holiday Inns. It's **800-HOLIDAY**. That's a vanity number. If your law firm's name is seven letters or less ("Smith, Johnson and Gruber, for example), you can work with "Smith". You will need to give your long distance provider a combination of numbers to research to see if they are available, but start with 877-22-SMITH, 877-23-SMITH and so on. Be sure to also list the numeric equivalent of your vanity number in the ad. For example, "Call Smith, Johnson and Gruber today at 877-23-SMITH (877-237-6484)."

**Making Your Yellow Pages Ad Effective:** Once you've ordered several toll-free numbers and assigned a unique toll-free number to each **Yellow Pages** in your marketing area, how do you make your ad (or ads) effective?

- ◆ **Ask Questions:** The most effective advertising is advertising that engages the prospect, and questions do that. "Injured in an accident?" is an excellent question for a personal injury attorney. "Ready to protect your intellectual property?" is an engaging question for a patent and trademark attorney.
- ◆ **List All the Services You Offer:** While the purpose of your **Yellow Pages** ad may be to find personal injury plaintiffs, be sure to list in your ad all of the types of cases you are ready to represent.
- ◆ **Set Yourself Apart:** Include in the ad what makes your law firm different or unique. "Open Wednesday and Thursday evenings for your convenience", "Three offices in Central Florida", "Se Habla Español" and "Free One-Hour Consultation" are just a few examples.
- ◆ **People Like Faces:** Unless you are really ugly, include a picture of yourself or you and your partners. Human faces soften an otherwise plain, text-only ad. Advertisers that sell a product always include a picture of the product in their ad. For a law firm, a picture of the attorney or attorneys sells you, and that's your product.
- ◆ **Take Advantage of Color:** Most of the **Yellow Pages** now offer a second color, usually red. Adding a second color is NOT expensive, and it really makes the ad jump off the page.
- ◆ **Work in Half-Tones and Reverse Text:** Instead of a second color—or in addition to a second color—try using shades of gray. A good designer can work in several shades of gray to give an ad a multi-color effect. Also, consider a block of black or gray with the text reversed in white. White text against a gray background can create a very rich look.
- ◆ **Consider Multiple Ads:** The larger **Yellow Pages** have both a general category for Attorneys or Lawyers, as well as specialized areas such as Criminal Law, Commercial Law, Trademarks-Patents-Copyrights, Personal Injury and so on. You really need an ad under each heading that applies to your practice, because once a visitor to the **Yellow Pages** find a heading that fits what he or she is seeking, his fingers stop walking.
- ◆ **Further Code the Ad with a Unique E-Mail Address:** In addition to a unique telephone number, also give readers a unique e-mail address they can respond to such as [legalservices@anderson-bennet.com](mailto:legalservices@anderson-bennet.com), [lawservices@anderson-bennett.com](mailto:lawservices@anderson-bennett.com) and so on so you can also 100% track e-mail responses from each **Yellow Pages** book.



**Yellow Pages** advertising can be a highly cost-effective element in your overall marketing program, but only if you carefully measure from where your inquiries are coming so you can spend your **Yellow Pages** advertising dollars wisely.

## Managing Your Practice: Optimize Your Return on Your Most Valuable Asset

Not every attorney realizes this, but the most valuable asset any law practice has is its people. How well are you managing this asset, and what type of return is it producing?

While it does not show up on your balance sheet as an asset, every law firm's most valuable asset is its people. Not just the attorneys, whose law degrees, bar memberships and areas of expertise make them valuable, but also the support staff. If your building burned to the ground, you could always find new offices and you can replace the computers and furniture. Should a **World Trade Center**-type disaster occur, and you lost your staff, could your practice survive?

It is not a coincidence that every large business has a Human Resources department, conducts periodic employee reviews, and utilizes employee-satisfaction and employee-retention initiatives. One of the most costly events at any business is replacing an employee who quits, gets fired or dies. While an employer can do little about the employee who dies, having to fire an employee indicates that the employer did not hire the right person in the first place. Having an employee leave is the result of the employer not meeting that employee's career needs.

In addition, the disruption of an employee leaving, finding a replacement, training and orienting that replacement, and the negative impact on employee morale that the entire continuum creates, makes employee turnover not only expensive but counterproductive!

Here are four, simple, relatively inexpensive things that every law firm should do, regardless of its size, to minimize employee turnover and optimize employee productivity.

- ◆ **Periodic Employee Review:** Every employee deserves to get feedback on a regular basis on his or her performance. Dr. Joy Brown, the host of a popular radio program, puts it this way: "While employees would rather be praised than criticized, they'd rather be criticized than ignored!" Once an employee (whether an associate, paralegal, receptionist or mail clerk) is hired, he or she should be formally reviewed every six months. Fortunately, there are several companies that supply the forms necessary to do this. If you do not have a source for these, call us at **866-LAWMAX-8** (866-529-6298), and we will refer you to several reputable vendors. The employee's immediate supervisor sits down with the employee, and they complete the form together, ranking the employee in several areas such as attendance, cooperation, job skills, productivity, initiative, creativity and so on. The form includes a place for the employee and his or her manager to set goals and objectives for the next sixth months or one year. **Cost? A few dollars. Value? Priceless!**
- ◆ **Recognize Each Employee's Birthday:** In many organizations, the employees actually do this on their own, but it should be company sponsored. Put a person (the office manager and the receptionist are good candidates) in charge of putting together a birthday calendar (just the date, not the year). On each employee's birthday, you buy a cake and a birthday card, and the card is circulated so everyone can sign it. Then, just after lunch or at the end of the day, you light the candles, everyone sings Happy Birthday, and you cut the cake. **Cost? Maybe \$50. Value? Priceless!**
- ◆ **Find a Reason to Publicly Praise an Employee:** JoAnne stayed late to get a brief ready to be filed the next morning. Jeff ran an overnight letter to the **FedEx** office to make sure it went out. Any employee does anything that is just slightly beyond his or her regular job duties. Walk over to that employee's desk or work area, and just loudly enough so others can hear, tell JoAnne or Jeff or whomever what a terrific job they did. **Cost? FREE! Value? Priceless!**
- ◆ **Thank the Team:** You land a big new client or you win a big case. Call all the staff together and tell them what a great job they did. That they worked as a team, and you really appreciate the effort they put forth. **Cost? FREE! Value? Just look at their faces!**

**Two Other Important Employee-Retention Practices:** In addition to these basic practices, there are two other rules to follow that will promote employee productivity and reduce employee turnover.

- ◆ **Praise in Public; Criticize in Private:** When an employee performs above and beyond the call of duty, praise that employee in front of his or her peers. It makes the employee feel great about himself or herself, makes the employee feel good about the law practice as an employer, gives the employee stature and recognition in front of his or her peers, and shows the other employees what they can expect from such initiative on their part. When an employee goofs, NEVER criticize or correct an employee in front of other employees. Discuss it privately in your office or in the conference room.



- ◆ **Use Praise to Correct Deficiencies:** Here is a typical situation. Rachel is a terrific paralegal. She is smart, reliable, hard-working and everyone likes her. The only problem is that she seems to be on the phone several times a day talking to her kids. This is where an employee review comes in as a tool to correct this problem. If you were to call Rachel into your office and criticize her for making too many personal calls, she will shut down, turn you off and simply not hear you, or she will launch into an argument about how she is a single mother, her children are all she has, she has to know where they are, and so on and so on. A much of what she says is probably valid.
- ◆ **Parallel Universe Time:** If, however, you bring Rachel in for her employee review, and working through the form you rate her high on attendance, performance, accuracy, reliability, teamwork and several other categories, Rachel is sitting their beaming. When you come to the section on the review form for goals for the coming year, you say something like, "Rachel you are a terrific employee and a real asset to this firm. In fact, there is only one way you could possibly be an even better employee." "Oh, really, what's that?" she asks in an open and positive manner. Now she is receptive to whatever changes you need in her behavior or work routine!

There are investments you may need to make in your law practice that will cost thousands or tens of thousands or dollars, but investing in improved employee morale is not just one of the cheapest things you can do, it is the single investment that will pay the greatest return!

## Add Value to Your Practice: Provide Financial Alternatives for Your Clients

When a client asks you for the second or third or fourth time, "When am I going to see some money?" there is an answer other than "These things take time."

Referring that client to **LawMax** has multiple benefits:

- ◆ **It Addresses—and Fixes—the Problem:** Telling that client that you are doing the best job you can, we have a court date, we have not been able to reach a satisfactory out-of-court settlement, and these things just take time, is exactly what you told him when he called two weeks ago! Referring a client in need of cash to **LawMax** gives that client a practical alternative to calling you back in two weeks, asking the same question, and getting the same answer.
- ◆ **It Stops the Calls:** Once a client gets a cash advance from **LawMax**, he stops calling and asking about money. That saves you and the employee who takes the call time, eliminates one more unproductive interruption of the workday, creates a more satisfied client, and improves employee morale.
- ◆ **It Enables You to More Aggressively Prosecute the Case:** With money pressures alleviated, you can now pursue the case more aggressively, and negotiate from strength. And that enables you to ultimately get a larger, fairer settlement for your client.



**An Ethical Practice:** Every bar association that has addressed this issue has ruled that attorneys cannot advance funds to their clients, but referring a client to a litigation financing firm such as **LawMax** is ethical.

**Have LawMax Literature On-Hand:** In fact, to truly be a resource to its clients, a law firm should have a supply of **LawMax** plaintiff brochures on hand. Call us at **866-LAWMAX-8** (866-529-6298), let us know how many you need, and we will ship them out right away.

## Disclaimer: The Marketing Advice We Offer May NOT Be Applicable in Your State!

We try to provide practical marketing advice as part of this e-letter, but please be aware that everything we recommend may not be permissible in every state. Each state Bar Association has slightly different rulings on what is and is not ethical for an attorney to do in terms of advertising and promotion, and each state has different laws covering exactly how attorneys can promote their practices. We recommend that you make sure what we promote in **Attorney@law** is both ethical and legal in the jurisdictions in which you practice.