

## Grow Your Practice Series:

November 2006

### 101 Ways to Effectively Market Your Law Firm

#### No. 41: Television Advertising Tells a Powerful Story!

More and more personal injury practices are turning to television advertising to attract potential clients. Television ads can tell a story, allowing potential clients to hear and see how a law firm has helped a specific client. Since television is a more direct marketing medium, it is easier to draw in viewers with a creative, attractive and compelling ad. Television puts the message in a potential client's living room where a client is relaxed and comfortable, ready to receive a marketing message. Since television is the most dynamic type of advertising, it can quickly grab the attention of a prospective client who may not, for example, read a newspaper ad.



Despite the fact that television ads can be great marketing, they are not ideal for every law practice. Television is clearly the most expensive form of advertising. In fact, there are two separate costs to television: Producing the ad, and then paying for air time to run it.

Most local stations will produce commercials for no charge, but the quality is likely to be poor. Large, national production companies will charge \$25,000 to \$100,000 to produce a quality ad. For most law practices, a freelance production house or small ad agency is the best alternative. These businesses can create a good quality ad for a few thousand dollars. Selecting a production house or agency to do your ad is not difficult: Look at what they've produced for other clients, and find out what they charged to produce each ad.

Once the commercial has been made, time must be purchased on local television stations or cable TV outlets. The cost for a 30-second spot can run from just \$40 or \$50 to hundreds of dollars, based on where and when the ad runs.

Advertising on television will require a commitment of money, time and resources. Professionals generally need to be brought in to script and shoot the commercial, and a buying service might be needed to place the slots where they will be viewed by the most likely clients.



As a starting point, law firms should consider one of the agencies that offers pre-packaged law firm television ads. These companies produce a professional—but generic—ad, then sell the same ad with different law firms' names on it to practices across the country, giving each law firm an exclusive in its metropolitan area. In this way, the same ad with two different law firms on it is not viewed by the same prospects. The next level up is one of the agencies that specializes in law firm advertising. They have experts on staff who know the nuances of promoting a law firm's capabilities while maintaining a professional demeanor.

**Television versus the Internet:** While every law firm should have a website, the inherent problem with a website is that it goes everywhere. It promotes the law firm's services to clients all over the world when most law firms just want to reach clients in their metropolitan areas. Television, however, is very focused (no pun intended). Most broadcast stations reach a 50 to 75-mile radius, so there is little wasted coverage. Cable television systems can get even more precise than that, reaching specific cities and towns—even specific neighborhoods!

There are several important issues that need to be considered before you invest in television advertising.

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- ◆ **Contact information:** Most potential clients watching a television ad will *NOT* have pen and paper handy. This means that any contact information provided in a television ad must be very easy to remember. Ending an ad with “Call Gruber, McDowell and Ferguson today at 816-738-0954” will generate little if any calls because viewers cannot remember the phone number! To make television advertising work, the ad must end with a memorable toll-free vanity number or a memorable website address. Choosing a vanity telephone number or website domain that ties into the ad’s marketing message makes it much easier to remember. **Example:** “Get the law working for you. Call **877-THE-LAW** today.” Or “Get the money you deserve by visiting **www.moneyyoudeserve.com**.” In each of these cases, “877-THE-LAW” is not the law firm’s regular phone number and “www.moneyyoudeserve.com” is not the law firm’s regular website. Both the vanity toll-free number and the specialty website are both set up specifically to capture inquires from the television advertising campaign.
- ◆ **24/7 Coverage:** While a special website set up for viewers of a television can serve visitors 24/7, the vanity toll-free number must also be able to take calls 24/7, so arrangements need to be made with an in-bound telemarketing service that can take calls around the clock.
- ◆ **Call to Action:** One of the most critical elements in any advertisement—especially a television ad—is a reason for viewers to act *immediately*. An effective television commercial must tell readers why they should call, and why they should do it *NOW!*
- ◆ **Testimonials Are Very Effective:** The most effective legal practice television ads include a casual monologue or dramatizations of client cases. Television is a great medium for telling a story and showing exactly how a law firm has helped specific clients with specific needs.
- ◆ **Personable and Professional Appearance:** A television commercial is far more attractive to potential clients when clients can actually see the attorneys who may be representing them. This creates a level of familiarity and comfort that many prospective clients need before making that call and meeting with an attorney.
- ◆ **Details of Expertise and Clients Helped:** Explaining the law firm’s areas of expertise, the types of cases handled, and who their clients typically are shows viewers that the legal practice is qualified to help them.
- ◆ **Slogan or Memorable Tag:** A short sentence or tag line, repeated throughout the ad, can help differentiate an ad from other commercials, both ads for other legal services and other commercials in general. An ad that is different is an ad that viewers remember.
- ◆ **Visual Appeal:** When creating a commercial, it is important to create an ad that is visually stimulating. This can be difficult, since most legal ads are information-based. It is important to work with the advertising professionals who can create an ad with both the intellectual content to convey the law firm’s capabilities and the visual appeal that makes television work.

Adding television to a law firm’s marketing program is a big step, but it is one that more and more law firms are successfully using to bring in new clients who would never have found that law firm through other means.

## The Written Word: Move Prospective Clients to Action!



Every legal practice needs marketing to bring in new clients. Unfortunately, many would-be clients do not react especially well to legal marketing. Some may have negative views of attorneys, while others are fearful of taking legal action or believe they cannot afford the services of a law firm. Many people in need of legal services are not aware of their legal options and are not sure their case warrants legal representation. Many people who have legitimate claims and could benefit from legal representation never contact an attorney, and that’s bad news for the both the victim and the attorney who never gets to try the case.

Effective legal marketing materials are those that overcome these problems and encourage those in need of legal help to seek it out. One of the best ways to ensure that prospective clients at least contact a law practice and meet with an attorney is to create legal marketing materials that assuage the most common fears prospective clients have about contacting an attorney. Ensuring that all marketing materials contain a compelling call to action also helps ensure that prospective clients take that critical, but difficult, first step and make that call!

The premise is simple: Clients want useful information in an understandable format, and they need to have a level of trust before they “make the call.” As a starting point, legal marketing material must dispel attorney stereotypes and convince a prospective client that he or she will receive practical answers to his or her questions. It is important, as well, that marketing materials convince the prospective client that he will not get a heavy-handed sales pitch. Many individuals who have never been involved in litigation are fearful of high legal fees and worry about committing themselves to a case that will prove expensive. The best marketing materials are solution-based and information-focused with a strong call to action.

This type of marketing material can include many things:

- ◆ **Areas of Expertise and Practice:** Prospective clients will often skim advertising materials, trying to determine whether a particular attorney or legal practice has the expertise they need. It is very important, therefore, to list all services and

expertise, and to show the prospect that his or her case will be handled expertly. A prospective client with a wrongful death claim needs to see the term “wrongful death” in the law firm’s marketing materials.

- ◆ **Longevity:** A client will often feel more comfortable with a law firm that has been in business for many years. It builds confidence and makes selecting that law firm a safe choice. For the newer law firm, other approaches can be taken. For example, the marketing materials can state that the partners in the firm have a combined total of over 50 years of trial law experience.
- ◆ **Professional Memberships:** Even when clients are not familiar with various organizations, they like to see an attorney who is obviously involved in a number of professional groups. It builds confidence in the ability of the attorney to help in a knowledgeable, professional way.
- ◆ **Allay Money Issues:** Law firms that offer a free, initial consultation need to make the service a key element in their marketing materials. Personal injury attorneys who work on contingency need to emphasize that the client does not need to come up with legal fees on the front end, and that the attorney only gets paid for producing results for the client.
- ◆ **Services Offered:** It is always a good idea to list all the services offered by the law firm, and to put these in an easy-to-scan format so prospective clients can quickly review the list to see if their type of case is offered.
- ◆ **Contact Information:** Making it easy for prospective clients to contact the law firm will generate more contacts. In addition to a telephone number, an e-mail address gives some clients a less threatening method of contacting the law firm. And including a fax number makes it easy for prospective clients to send in documents that support their claims or about which they have questions. Listing the law firm’s website gives prospects a way to learn more about the law firm, and do so anonymously.
- ◆ **Past Clients and Cases:** Describing specific cases in a narrative format can be very powerful, although the plaintiffs and defendant should be described generically. For example, “a 39-year-old woman and mother of two children was injured.....” and “the defendant, an interstate trucking company...”
- ◆ **Pictures of the Principals and/or Staff:** Putting a face with a name—or several faces with the name of the law practice—makes any piece of marketing material friendlier, warmer, more personal and less threatening.



**The Marketing-Selling Continuum:** The role of marketing material is not to convince a client to engage a specific law firm. That comes through personal, one-on-one interaction. The role of marketing is to entice, encourage and help a prospective client make an initial contact with a law practice. Without that first critical step, nothing else can happen.

## Is Time Your Enemy or Your Ally? You Get to Decide Which!

The benefits of a lawsuit advance extend far beyond the fact that it often helps a lawsuit plaintiff avoid eviction or foreclosure. It also shifts time to the benefit of the plaintiff-attorney team.

**A Common—but Unfortunate—Tale:** A personal injury plaintiff has a valid claim, and there is clear evidence of negligence on the part of the defendant. The defendant makes a low-ball offer, so the attorney takes that low-ball offer to the plaintiff, recommending that he reject the offer and hang tough because the case is worth a lot more. With time, the attorney can get a fairer, larger settlement for the plaintiff.



The plaintiff agrees, but he also needs cash! He’s been out of work, his savings are gone, and now the rent, car payment and utility bills are past due. Any money now, when the plaintiff really needs it, is better than more money later after he is homeless! So the plaintiff tells his attorney to accept the low-ball offer.

**Parallel Universe:** The plaintiff gets an advance from **LawMax** to cover his rent, car payments and utility bills, so his attorney can discreetly tell the defendant what he can do with his insulting, ridiculous, low-ball offer! Now the plaintiff and his attorney can really hang tough. They negotiate from strength, the attorney can more aggressively prosecute the case, and he can ultimately get the plaintiff the fairer, larger settlement the plaintiff really deserves!



## 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.