

Getting Cases as a Small Law Firm in a Market Dominated by Big Law

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Most if not all of us have in our market at least one law firm that seems to get all the business. These law firms have seemingly unlimited marketing dollars to splash their name all over town. So how are we solo and small firms supposed to compete with these 800-pound gorillas? How can we match their enormous marketing budgets? Despite our small size, we can still be competitive with these firms if we have an internal marketing strategy.

An advertisement banner for iManage Closing Folders. The banner has a black background with white text and icons. On the left, there is the iManage logo (a circle with 'iM') and the text 'iManage Closing Folders'. In the center, the text reads 'M&A deals are **complex.** Signature page management shouldn't be.' Below this text are three small, overlapping document icons. On the right side, there is a rounded rectangular button with the text 'WATCH A DEMO'.

Internal marketing involves leveraging our list of people who know, like, and trust us. External marketing, on the other hand, involves spending big money on Google, radio, and other expensive advertising platforms to “shout the loudest.” That is primarily how large firms market. Internal marketing is an effective and affordable marketing alternative that allows us to get plenty of cases, regardless of the number of 800-pound gorillas in our given market.

While internal marketing to your list is inexpensive, it does require work. If you do the work consistently and play the long game, however, you will be extremely competitive in your market—without going broke. Plus, your results

will compound as your list grows. Here are some internal marketing strategies I have used at my law firm that have worked very well for us and that I believe will also work for you.

Always Be Building Your List

People generally only buy from people they know, like, and trust. Make sure you have a constantly growing list of these people. Former clients, current clients, attorneys, friends, former classmates, and everyone else who may possibly refer you a case must be on this list. You want a big list because you never know who may refer you a case. This is an organic list that grows week by week, year by year, and is, in my opinion, our firm's most valuable asset in business. It is pure gold and is something that cannot be bought. By always building your list, you can grow your practice without breaking the bank. That allows you to be extremely competitive—even against 800-pound gorilla firms.

Constantly Nurture Your List

Having a list is useless if you don't nurture it. When neglected, your list will wither and die. The most effective way I have discovered to nurture my list is through regular communication. Weekly emails, monthly newsletters, handwritten cards, and other regular "touches" will nurture the contacts on your list. This constant nurturing will ensure that you maintain a large fence around your list so they don't forget you and go elsewhere when they need a lawyer. The key is always to remain top of mind whenever someone on your list needs a lawyer. It is very true that people will forget about you if you don't stay in touch with them. When communicating with your list, though, *always* give them valuable content that helps them. Don't make it all about you. Share something you learned recently and teach them about something. That is what people find interesting and useful and makes them stick around to hear what you have to say next.

Make Sure Your List Knows Your Story

Your list must know something about you other than the fact that you are a lawyer. Try to get a little personal in your communications to your list. I frequently share with my list my story of witnessing addiction and homelessness at a young age. This develops connection and affinity. This is personal, relationship-based marketing, which is the highest and most effective form of marketing there is. So, consider getting a little vulnerable with your list if you are comfortable doing so. This *humanizes* you to your list, and that is massively important.

This internal marketing approach of building the tribe, nurturing the tribe, and getting personal with them is something that most lawyers fail to leverage. Because people on your list presumably know, like you, and trust you, and because you regularly stay in touch with them, internal marketing deepens a relationship with them that is meaningful. No TV ad or billboard can ever do that.

If you have other ideas when it comes to effective marketing that allows you to compete without breaking the bank, please email me at cearley@carleylawgroup.com because I would love to hear from you.

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SOLO, SMALL FIRM AND GENERAL PRACTICE DIVISION

TOPIC:

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