

Charisma Sells: Get Yours Here

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strategy, as their name partners are often uncharismatic and/or deceased.

In such event, the firm may consider calling in an appropriate celebrity. Thus, an admiralty firm might consider hiring Bob Denver of “Gilligan’s Island” fame; similarly, “slip-and-fall” practitioners might want to sign former President Ford. The firm should, however, make sure that its celebrity endorser bears some minimal relationship to the firm’s practice, a lesson painfully learned from the disappointing “Bo Knows Patent Law” campaign.

Initiate Promotions: Consider offering clients incentives to give you their business. Following a popular supermarket technique, firms could extend a “Sue One, Sue One Free” offer to a prospective plaintiff in a multiple tort-feasor lawsuit. Following the airlines’ lead, firms could offer a “Frequent Filer” program, granting free representation to habitual litigants.

Another popular promotional technique is the contest. A firm could place an ad in a major newspaper depicting a page from one of its recently filed briefs. The ad would invite readers to find typos in the document. Success would entitle them to valuable prizes (paid for with the savings resulting from the termination of the associate responsible for proofreading it).

Use ‘Offshore’ Labor: Low prices attract customers. Thus, firms in high-billing-rate legal centers such as New York, Chicago and Los Angeles could reduce costs and overhead by farming out more mundane tasks to satellite offices in remote areas such as Omaha or Phoenix. Of course, quality control is a serious concern, as the work product of such remote facilities, staffed by attorneys who work more normal hours, live in comfortable homes and actually have a life, may be of an embarrassingly higher quality than that of the assigning main offices.

Start Direct-Mail Solicitation: Industrious law firms could resort to solicitation of prospective clients through the mails. Firms would locate qualified candidates by purchasing the customer lists of products favored by those holding high corporate positions, such as Minoxidil, Maalox or any brand of extra-strength antiperspirant.

Sponsor Television Shows and Events: A matrimonial law firm could buy time on “The Newlywed Game,” and a products liability firm could advertise on any of the do-it-yourself “home improvement” shows running on cable.

While some may view these suggestions as overly progressive, the point behind them is not. Having painfully learned that the legal business, like others, is susceptible to general economic hard times, lawyers must learn to sell their “product” in an increasingly competitive marketplace, trading their blue pinstripes for gray flannel and Wall Street for Madison Avenue. ■



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