

The Bottom Line

The newsletter of the Illinois State Bar Association's Section on Law Office Management & Economics

Marketing: Why it has to be done

BY KERRY M. LAVELLE

In the business world, going out and getting new customers and clients falls under the label of "marketing." Marketing encompasses all aspects of obtaining new customers and clients including, but not limited to, lead generation, initial contact, and converting those leads to actual fee-paying clients and customers. Large firms sometimes call this simply "networking" or "client development." In either case, the

whole continuum of effort between getting your name out there to signing up a fee-paying client, we call "marketing."

Why is it a Necessity?

Marketing efforts by you and other members of your law firm are the life blood of your law firm. Remember, clients rarely, if ever, hire an attorney for an

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BY ADAM CITRON

Law firms are nothing if not cautious by their very nature. Because of this, many firms have been hesitant to take the jump into the world of 100% cloud-based environments, if they have done so at all. Many are still content to sink money into totally on-site environments that, while completely under their control, show their age (and limitations) more and more with each passing day.

In truth, the cloud has come a long way as a concept and as a technology in

recent years, and if your law firm has yet to embrace the benefits that come along with a 100% cloud-based environment, now would be an excellent time to start for several compelling reasons.

1. Cybersecurity

Perhaps the biggest reason law firms should make moves to adopt cloud technology now is also, arguably, the most important. While it's true that cybersecurity is an issue that affects all

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ongoing monthly fee-specific relationship. We are project-based service providers; i.e., they hire us for a specific project that has a start date and an ending event on the conclusion of a case or the business transaction with a final payment being made to the lawyers.

Accountants, on the other hand, have relationships with clients to provide ongoing financial reporting and tax return work. Such relationships provide “annuity”-type fee streams that are ongoing and, unless the accountant fails to perform, it is very likely that the accountant will have a client with repeatable ongoing work far into the future. Since we know, as lawyers, that our projects come and go, while you are working on an existing project for a client you need to be out networking and marketing to get the next project from a new client or from an existing client.

If 100% of your effort is spent on servicing existing clients, you need to hope that existing clients will refer more cases and more work to you in the future to build your business. No doubt many of them will, if you do a great job for the client and, depending on the client’s needs in the future, the client will hire you again for other related matters or talk glowingly about you and your law firm to other like-minded business people or neighbors. All of these will bring in a certain degree of referrals from those folks who receive a great message about you and your law firm.

Passive Referrals

Friend-to-friend, or word-of-mouth referrals are good and always welcome, but they are simply not enough to build a high-growth law firm. A separate marketing effort needs to be made to reach out to existing clients and referral sources to talk about what you do, the breadth of your services (if other partners or associates do work in practice groups other than the one that the client hired you for), and network

and speak proudly about what you do to help clients. While we all know there are only 24 hours in a day, you must spend at least six to eight hours a day in the office working on client cases. Additional time needs to be set aside either during the work week or after hours to go out and meet potential clients and referral sources to grow your business. I often say that you can never get new business sitting behind your desk working on briefs or contracts 50 hours a week. Remember, the next new case is the life blood of the law firm going forward.

Conclusion

You and every associate in your office needs to understand that it is their responsibility to talk proudly about the firm in public settings and to explain to people, when asked, how your firm adds value to legal issues facing small businesses and individuals alike. It is not just one person’s obligation to bring in business in a law firm—everyone should be charged with the duty to speak proudly about where they work and how they add value. Increased revenues at a law firm solve many economic problems faced by many small but growing law firms. New cases need to continue to come in, expand the services of the law firm, and provide a good financial basis for the firm. Then, as the client base continues to grow, cross-marketing with different services to existing clients is marketing to the “low-hanging fruit” for your firm. If clients like you, trust you, and believe that you will continue to help them, they will, over time, hire you again and again. But why wait? Use a good, solid marketing plan to obtain new clients on an on-going basis. ■

Kerry Lavelle is the author of *The Business Guide to Law: Creating and Operating a Successful Law Firm* published by the American Bar Association. It can be found on the ABA website at: <http://bit.ly/1J1p0Aa>. He grew his solo practice to a 28-attorney firm. He is a frequent speaker at bar association seminars and conferences on law office management.

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7 reasons law firms should adopt cloud technology now

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of us—meaning that both personal users and enterprise users are equally as likely to become victims of cyber attacks—the climate is particularly dangerous for law firms for a host of different reasons.

The most famous example of this idea in action takes the form of the Panama Papers¹—a leak of over 11 million files and other documents from Mossack Fonseca, the fourth-largest offshore law firm in the world. But if you think that it's possible for a firm to be “too small” to garner this type of attention from hackers and others with malicious intentions, you'll want to think again.

According to the American Bar Association's ABA TECHREPORT 2017, more than one out of every three law firms in the United States with 10 - 49 attorneys reported a data breach within the last few years.² The National Law Review reports that 37% of law firms that suffered any type of data breach reported significant losses from not just a lack of billable hours, but also business downtime.³

Statistics like these, coupled with the fact that the average cost of a data breach hit \$3.62 million in 2017,⁴ underline why cybersecurity is a hugely important factor for law firms that must be addressed at all costs.

The cloud, therefore, becomes one of the most effective ways for law firms of all sizes to accomplish precisely that. With sophisticated encryption, access to technology like enterprise-grade firewalls and advanced intrusion detection and prevention systems, the cloud has quickly become the first line of defense for many firms. The type of security offered by cloud technology is difficult to replicate in a totally on-site IT environment – to say nothing of how expensive even attempting to do so would be.

2. Disaster Recovery Becomes Immediate

Another major reason law firms should work to adopt cloud technology as

soon as possible is the far more effective approach to disaster recovery that it allows them to take. For the sake of argument, consider the types of disasters that may lead to downtime beyond a hack or other intrusion attempt. There are certain elements that you simply cannot predict—your physical law firm might get hit with some type of tornado or other natural disaster, or a freak accident could burn the building to the ground. Not only does downtime from events like these cost businesses in North America an average of \$700 billion per year collectively,⁵ that number breaks down to a massive \$66,240 per minute on average.

It's not just the fact that your teams are losing productivity. Missed business opportunities and lost revenue make up 17% of accrued losses. Costs related to repairs – that is, getting your systems back up and running – account for just 5% of the aforementioned losses.⁶

But again, with the cloud, this is not something that you necessarily must worry about. Your firm's latest backups will always be easily accessible in your cloud environment. You could lose access to every computer in your firm, and all you would have to do is move to a different machine, log into your secure cloud environment and start working again like nothing ever happened in the first place.

3. The Power of Working Remotely

Lawyers and other legal professionals have long needed to work remotely; after all, they often spend even more time in court or meeting off-site with clients than they do in their own offices. For years, there hasn't really been a perfect solution to facilitate these needs; setting up a secure, remote environment normally requires dedicated hardware, services like remote desktop applications and more.

With the cloud, however, the entire system becomes totally remote by default. So long as a lawyer has access to some type

of device (including mobile phones and tablets) with an active Internet connection, they can be just as productive out of the office while they're waiting for their client meeting to begin as they can inside it. The process of setting up and maintaining a remote environment becomes a natural part of your infrastructure—it no longer requires a series of extra (frustrating) steps like it did in the past.

4. IT Budgeting Becomes More Predictable

Law firms must remain on the cutting-edge of technology, both to guarantee the quality of work that they're able to do and to maintain their own competitive advantage in an incredibly crowded industry. Yet at the same time, this doesn't exactly come cheaply—expenses like new document management software and new servers to support an increasingly complex infrastructure quickly add up. It can become difficult to truly predict what resources will be needed and when, all of which makes even simple IT budget forecasts difficult for most firms on the best of days.

But with a cloud environment, most of these fears evaporate; this is especially so when you partner with someone like a managed services provider. Those frequent—yet unpredictable—costs are traded in for a strict, fixed monthly fee. With that comes the ability to add new servers or other resources with ease. All you have to do is pick up the phone and make a call. Suddenly, IT costs no longer become a potential hurdle to overcome for a firm that is continuing to grow and expand.

When document management software or other resources are provided by way of a SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) package, you also always have access to the latest versions. There is no further need to worry about when that next unpredictable upgrade cost will come.

5. Compliance Nightmares Go Away

Cloud computing can also help law firms address another one of the most pressing challenges of the modern age: Compliance. Not only does the legal profession have its own set of rules and regulations that firms must adhere to when it comes to creating, storing and protecting client data, but this can also become especially confusing if your firm touches other industries like healthcare.

Not only do law firms already worry about complying with Sarbanes-Oxley, HIPAA, and other regulations, but keeping clients' credit and debit card payment information secure as well. The ability to both embrace technology and maintain compliance with these regulations and more is nearly impossible in a totally on-site environment. Keep in mind that these regulations are also often changing—if you miss something and fail to adjust, your firm could wind up on the receiving end of a violation before you even realize you have a problem.

Partnering with a cloud computing provider helps to solve these challenges, however, as they essentially “take care” of compliance-related issues on your firm's behalf. You don't have to worry about assembling your own compliant environment from a series of disparate sources—provided that you've selected a company that specializes in both the legal field and any other industries that your firm happens to touch, your system is compliant from the outset. Suddenly one of your major pain points as a legal professional evaporates overnight.

6. Unparalleled Flexibility

As stated, the technological requirements of most law firms are inherently malleable; industry shifts require the adoption of new techniques or best practices, and new clients often require you to completely adjust the way you and your teams like to do things to meet their needs. When you're trying to build a totally on-site environment to service all of these masters at the same time, it can become prohibitively expensive. The flexibility you need is there, sure—if you're willing to pay for it. You also need to pay someone to set

it up, to maintain it, etc.

The cloud, however, is flexible by its very nature—a totally cloud-based environment can be whatever you need it to be, whenever you need it to be, even if those needs continue to change. Often, most firms go with a hybrid cloud approach—A mixture of the best that both a private environment and a public cloud have to offer. A private cloud comprehensive IT infrastructure can offer services like virtualized hardware, software and security, business disaster recovery and so much more. The public cloud brings with it benefits like stress-free management and maintenance, significantly lower costs and much more.

The major advantage of this for a law firm, in particular, is something of a “best of both worlds” approach. Any services or data that must be stored in a controlled private environment can be, while everything else can be stored in the public cloud. You get to maintain complete control over the aspects of your environment that demand it and can experience 100% of the benefits of the public cloud for everything else. You could store confidential client information in the private cloud, for example, while utilizing the public cloud for HR materials and other less-sensitive data. In that situation, everyone wins.

7. Supporting the Way Your Teams Like to Work

As stated, one of the major benefits of cloud technology for law firms comes by way of the ease at which lawyers can work remotely. Along the same lines, the cloud also offers greater flexibility in terms of other trends sweeping across the legal industry—like BYOD (“bring your own device”) firms.

Thanks to the fact that smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices have become a ubiquitous part of our lives, legal professionals who are looking for a way to do more “on the go” have contributed significantly to the rise of BYOD law firms for the last several years. It's something that the ABA itself has taken notice of, particularly due to the risks that are involved.⁷

If a lawyer is using their personal smartphone to access sensitive client

information, this will likely contribute to a rise in productivity—but this also represents yet another vulnerability if that phone is lost or stolen. The ABA has long urged firms to create more holistic and effective BYOD programs and policies, and, luckily, a totally cloud-based environment helps to address many of these challenges, essentially all at the same time.

Cloud-based environments are inherently very effective when it comes to Mobile Device Management (MDM), as the same security that protects the cloud environment is naturally extended to the devices themselves. Having access to a cloud-based environment also makes it easier to not only track who accesses which files and from where, but to remotely wipe those devices and deny access in the event that they are stolen. Many cloud environments also offer advanced features like both in-transit and at-rest encryption, allowing both the data itself to be protected in the cloud, on a lawyer's personal device, and as it moves back and forth between those two locations.

In the End

Law firms have long been on the cutting-edge of technology—in many ways, their industry by its very nature demands that they be. Yet at the same time, even large firms often employ small IT teams—the people tasked with setting up and maintaining an in-house infrastructure that meets the needs of today for dozens or even hundreds of hardworking attorneys while also making sure that the firm itself is ready for the challenges of tomorrow as well.

Over the last few years, cloud technology has emerged as one of the best ways for law firms across the world to “work smarter, not harder”—enjoying all the rewards of technology with as few of the risks as possible. With the prominence of hybrid environments that blend together the best of both private and public cloud infrastructures, factors like the ease at which people can work remotely, security and compliance and others are suddenly no longer a cause for alarm. Lawyers (and their organizational leaders) can now spend less time worrying about the limitations of the infrastructure itself and can devote their attention to

the thing that matters most of all: Moving their firm forward. ■

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executives.

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Should initial client consultations be free?

BY KERRY M. LAVELLE

A great topic among law practitioners for a “point-counterpoint” debate is whether initial consultations with potential clients should be free or whether a client should pay for the first consultation.

The Scenario

Just to set the ground rules, free means absolutely free with no charge to the client. Typically, the client calls the office and makes an inquiry as to whether you handle a certain type of work—either through a referral or responding to one of your marketing efforts—and schedules an appointment. You then meet with them at no cost or obligation to the potential client and the potential client leaves the meeting with an option to either hire or not hire you.

In the alternative, when a potential client calls your office, you or your staff person taking the call lays the groundwork that there will be an initial (presumably flat) consultation fee for a 30-minute or one-hour consultation, which will be expected to be paid on the day of the visit. Some law offices may even state that the fee paid on the initial visit can be applied to future work going forward, effectively making the first consultation free if you are hired for the project.

Both of those scenarios make sense and, speaking to any practitioner who believes deeply in one or the other system, he or she will argue that their system works the best. Now let us find the strengths and shortcomings of both systems.

The Free Consult

The free initial consultation may be a policy of your law firm simply because it meets the competition. If everyone else in your area is providing free consultations, it seems to make sense that, to meet the competition, you need to do the same. After all, if a potential client can meet with three other attorneys for free to learn about the merits of their case or the competency of the lawyers to handle their business transaction, free seems like the way to go. However, anyone who provides free initial consultations will tell you that their life can be overtaken with free initial consultations and not getting new, paying clients. There could be one of two problems going on in such case.

First, you are letting in low-grade leads into your office without a quick vetting system during the initial telephone call. If your assistants do all of your scheduling and you never talk to the potential client, you would never have the ability to vet the potential client and make a determination as to whether the potential client, the transaction, or the case is something that you would want to take on. As such, you need to have a very brief conversation with the potential client before you schedule a free consultation.

Secondly, you may have a conversion problem in your approach to face-to-face meetings with clients. Client conversions are a separate topic completely and the science of converting potential clients to fee-paying clients when they come into your office is very broad-based and

complex. However, once you meet with a potential client face-to-face, it is your moment to shine and your opportunity to let them know that you care about their case, you care about them, and that you are, based on your unique selling proposition, the best possible attorney to handle their legal matter. If you cannot convey that to them, your conversion ratio will be very low.

Charge for Consults

If you charge for initial consultations, you are missing the opportunity to be in front of many potential new clients. Remember, all your marketing efforts are intended to get the phone to ring. Once the phone rings, you have the highest potential ability to sign up the prospect as a fee-paying client if you meet with them face-to-face. If, by not understanding the competitive nature of your market, you charge for initial consultations and people choose not to come because of the fee, you are missing an opportunity to sign up a new client.

I know, the counter-argument is that people who come in and pay for an initial consultation are better potential clients and will see you as a confident, high-level practitioner who has the boldness to charge for all of your time—including initial consultations. That fact may be true. But let me assure you that there is a very narrow group of potential clients that will come in for the first time, sight unseen, and be willing to pay for an initial consultation when your competitors are giving it away

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for free. A hybrid of the two structures would be to change the consult fee, but agree to credit such fee towards the retainer deposit. Under that structure, you have only given away a “free” initial consultation to someone who has actually hired you.

Flexibility

Remember, not all of the same rules apply to every type of practice group. Sophisticated business owners usually do not care if the initial consultation is free or if there is a fee. However, sophisticated business owners are usually going to a known lawyer for a review of their case or transaction. They would expect to be charged when their existing lawyer analyzed new legal issues whether it be a dispute or a business transaction. A less-sophisticated business owner—i.e., a person getting into a new start-up business for the first time—may be very cost-conscious and may very much be offended by an initial consultation fee. These types of clients can blossom into long-term—sometimes life-long—clients that a few-hundred-dollar

initial consultation fee may have scared away.

Similarly, all practice groups have to be viewed separately. Personal injury lawyers of course do not charge for initial consultations because their cases are taken on a contingency-fee arrangement. They understand the competition in the marketplace, and would not dream of charging for an initial consultation when all of their competitors work on a contingency-fee arrangement. They will do whatever they need to do ethically to sign up the new client. Divorce clients tend to use up quite a bit of time meeting with multiple lawyers and being very price-conscious. Estate planning clients tend to come to your office based on referrals, and are somewhat presold to your office and therefore there is a high probability that they will retain you after the first meeting so long as you demonstrate your competence to them during the first meeting. Because many attorneys do estate planning work on a value-billing

system, the time and effort of the initial consultation is usually embedded into some value-driven pricing for the estate planning documentation.

In summary, when analyzing the different practice groups, market conditions, and the potential client expectations, I advise attorneys to meet or beat the competition. There is no doubt that the highest probability of signing up a client is during a face-to-face meeting as you demonstrate your depth of knowledge, empathy for the client, and explain the way you propose to navigate through the transaction or legal dispute for which you are being interviewed. Get to meet the client face-to-face, and then begin to analyze your conversion skills. ■

Kerry Lavelle is the author of *The Business Guide to Law: Creating and Operating a Successful Law Firm* published by the American Bar Association. It can be found on the ABA website at: <http://bit.ly/1J1p0Aa>. He grew his solo practice to a 26-attorney firm. He is a frequent speaker at bar association seminars and conferences on law office management.

Identifying and recruiting firm leadership

BY ALEX RECHENMACHER

Recruiting executive-level leadership is, alternately, an exciting and worrisome task. Unlike the traditional application process, candidates are not simply being asked to fit into a predefined role. In hiring top management, companies offer candidates the opportunity not simply to perform a task, but often to shape the culture, mission and objectives of an entire organization.

A quick survey of even some of our nation's top executive positions in 2018 shows the scope and variety that can characterize a potential managerial talent pool: A CEO of an oil company, a film producer and hedge fund manager, a U.S. senator, a billionaire philanthropist, a Marine Corps general, a Navy SEAL, a neurosurgeon, and some former state governors. For better or worse, even the

position of President of the United States has been held over the last three decades by two governors, a senator, a movie actor and a real estate tycoon.

Law firm leadership is not quite as flexible (thanks to Rule 5.4 of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct) as other companies that are not in the business of providing legal advice. Nevertheless, the diversity of background, expertise and management methods of those in the legal profession are every bit as abundant as the people we serve and represent. Therefore, our approach in searching for executive leadership in this profession can benefit from similar principles.

The Four Types of Executive Recruit

Of course, search firms for management-level talent vary in their method and mindset when identifying candidates for

their client companies. Depending on the position of your firm, the culture of its employees, the competitive environment of the local profession and direction identified by ownership, entirely different candidate pools may be suggested for your firm's opening. Broadly speaking, however, candidates for these positions typically will fall into one of four general categories.

The Lateral Hire

The “lateral hire,” or recruiting your new partner or executive from a sitting position with a similar environment at another firm, is the easiest and often the least-risky type of selection for an organizational head. The lateral hire knows the business well and has the experience of leading a law firm not dissimilar from your own. For what it is worth to you, they have already proven themselves to some extent by rising

through the ranks of leadership elsewhere. Their track record, good or bad, will be readily available for you and other partners or directors to examine, question, and rely upon. These candidates will often require little oversight or guidance and provide confidence that the job will get done.

On the other hand, lateral hiring can come with some admonition. For one thing, because they are established, lateral hires are likely to demand a higher level of compensation than other types of hires. Also, while lateral hires are often the safest option for a leader, they are often consequently the least-bold choice—not ideal for the firm with a ‘growth’ mindset, to market to new clients or to provide new or different services to existing clients. Additionally, interviewers are cautioned to investigate the circumstances around the candidate leaving their prior position—will things similarly not ‘work out’ with your firm as well?

The Emerging Leader

The “emerging leader” has proven herself at second-level management and is primed for a promotion to bigger and better responsibilities. Whether developed internally, or coming from another firm, this person has mastered their existing workspace. They may not be knowledgeable in all aspects of the available position, but their work product in their current position is proof that they have the capability to develop the skill and proficiency to get the job done. The emerging leader will have an excellent understanding of the law in their current position, a talent for working with teams of people, and prior supervisory experience.

The emerging leader is a subtle combination of experience and fresh perspective. Firms should be cautioned that this person will require some guidance, and maybe even require some on-the-job training. Like the lateral hire, the emerging leader can require higher compensation proportionate to their new responsibilities and expectations.

The Rising Star

The “rising star” is also looking for a promotion, but they will not have the track

record of either the emerging leader or the lateral hire. Undoubtedly, the rising star will be someone who shows promise outside traditional norms of expectations for prior experience. Think of Theo Epstein and his rise to the position of general manager of the Boston Red Sox at the age of 28. Like any gamble, the rising star is often an enormous risk but has the potential for serious upside.

The hesitations for hiring a rising star are obvious. This person will need to do an awful lot of on-the-job training, and so must show interviewers that they possess an incredible capacity to learn new things and a durability to weather the more difficult aspects of the job. If this is the right option for your firm, with the right cultivation, the rising star will be an excellent attorney, an obvious leader, a dedicated worker, an amiable personality and a personnel investment that could pay dividends for many years to come.

The Non-Traditional Hire

The fourth and potentially most uncertain option for executive leadership (depending on how impressed you are by your rising star options) is the “non-traditional hire.” This is the oil executive CEO that becomes Secretary of State, or the neurosurgeon who becomes Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Obviously, these candidates will not have the track record of their colleagues, but clever interviewers can identify qualities in these people that would be a good fit for the position nevertheless. Non-traditional hires can be an intriguing option for firms looking to upset the status quo.

In the practice of law (where we are limited to hiring licensed attorneys for attorney positions), non-traditional hires could mean identifying candidates who have worked in completely different areas of law, solo or small practitioners looking for a different platform, corporate attorneys, or even candidates who have been away from practice for a time but maintained their license while working in a different profession. Like the rising star, non-traditional candidates can be a lucrative personnel investment, but they require attentive and inquiring

interviewers, intelligent on-the-job assessment and probably (at least initially) a fair amount of guidance from the firm’s existing ownership.

Law Firm Soul-Searching

“If you really want to be at the top of your form, know who you are,” Maya Angelou famously stated in 2002 to a group of cadets and officers at the US Coast Guard Academy. It would be impossible to find the right candidate for top-tier leadership without knowing the direction that the owners, or board of a company, wishes for the firm to go. It is impossible to identify the direction to go without knowing where you are, as a firm.

Whether by hosting a firm retreat or by surveying the firm’s stakeholders—employees, clients, partners, etc.—the process of identifying the firm’s intentions for the immediate and long-term future are critical *prior to* selecting its future leadership. While a rising star or non-traditional hire may be intriguing, your firm may require the steady hand of an established leader.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of your firm? What challenges and opportunities are on the horizon? What are your one-, five- and 10-year goals? Once you have identified the ship’s destination, then it is time to begin your search for a captain. ■



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What is the business reason for concentrating your practice in a specific area?

BY KERRY M. LAVELLE

The question as to whether you should be a generalist or a specialist has been bantered about for years in the practice of law. There have been many seminars and books commenting on the subject, leading to the overwhelming conclusion that we, as attorneys, need to concentrate our practice in one or two narrow areas of law and become really good, efficient practitioners in those areas of the law.

Generalist

Contrarians will argue that as a small or solo practicing lawyer, you need to generate revenue in any way that it comes and sometimes picking up wills and trusts drafting, real estate closings, lease disputes in court, and a divorce case are all the natural opportunities for you to earn income. That may be a true economic necessity for the new or small practitioner to put food on the table, but in the long run it is not sustainable for a successful practice and career in the law.

Any experienced practitioner will tell you that it is his or her deep understanding of a few (often-times related) areas of law that made him or her successful in the practice of law. Remember a “jack of all trades is a master of none.” We need to be great at something and being great in one or two areas of the law is hard enough—it is difficult to be great in multiple areas of the law.

A Focused Practice

More than just expertise, let's look at the business case for concentrating one's practice. By concentrating your practice to one area of law, you can network with other attorneys trying to gain their confidence in referring clients much more easily than if you practice in a great breadth of areas. Networking among other lawyers is eminently easier when you do not appear to be competing with those same lawyers. For

example, if divorce work is your strength, you will be able to obtain referrals from every attorney in your network that does not do any divorce work. And even if they do divorce work, you will be able to get some conflict work from them if they trust your skill set.

Remember, once you establish your concentration in the practice of law, you absolutely need to become great at it—you can then expect referrals from attorneys primarily because you are the best attorney they know at providing legal services in that area of the law, and secondarily, because they do not do it and cannot best service the client's needs. In turn, if they are real estate or bankruptcy attorneys, you can refer those cases to them, building a network of trust that supports both of your offices. Networking among our peers in the bar works best when your selling proposition to the market is that you are a high-level attorney providing exceptional services in one or two narrow areas of the law. Furthermore, an attorney with a focused practice is able to more easily make referrals to other attorneys (for matters

outside of the respective practice area).

Take a look at the model of personal injury lawyers. Their practice is sustained by referrals, and in fact pay referral fees in a way that are governed under the code of professional responsibility in their jurisdictions. Personal injury lawyers understand that they can network with estate planning, business transaction, divorce, criminal, traffic lawyers, and all the rest of the practitioners out there that do not do personal injury work. When they do network, they want to become the personal injury lawyer connection with your particular network. Personal injury lawyers are excellent at networking among other lawyers that do not provide their services, that need and want to put their clients with the best possible representation. ■

Kerry Lavelle is the author of *The Business Guide to Law: Creating and Operating a Successful Law Firm* published by the American Bar Association. It can be found on the ABA website at: <http://bit.ly/1J1p0Aa>. He grew his solo practice to a 26-attorney firm. He is a frequent speaker at bar association seminars and conferences on law office management.



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Wednesday, 04-04-18 – LIVE Webcast—Hot Topics in Trial – Session 1 – Jury Selection and Jury Questions. Presented by Tort Law. 12:00-1:30 PM.

Tuesday, 04-10-18 – Webinar—Keeping Your Clients Happy and Coming Back for More. Practice Toolbox Series. 12:00-1:00 PM.

Wednesday, 04-11-18 – LIVE Webcast—Tips and Traps in UCC Compliance. Presented by Commercial Banking. 12:00-1:00 PM.

Thursday, 04-12-18 – ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Secrets of the Citation Act and Tips for Enforcing Judgement. Presented by Commercial Banking. 8:55 AM – 12:15 PM.

Thursday, 04-12-18 – LIVE Webcast—Secrets of the Citation Act and Tips for Enforcing Judgement. Presented by Commercial Banking. 8:55 AM – 12:15 PM.

Thursday, 04-12-18 Webinar—Advanced Tips for Enhanced Legal Research on Fastcase. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association – Complimentary to ISBA Members only. 12:00-1:00 pm.

Thursday, 04-13-18 – NIU Hoffman Estates—Spring 2018 DUI and Traffic Law Program. Presented by Traffic Law. All day.

Wednesday, 04-18-18 – LIVE Webcast—Mastering the Dead Man's Act. Presented by Trusts and Estates. 2:00-3:15.

Thursday, 04-19-18 – Chicago Regional Office—Nuts and Bolts of Juvenile Court. IJC/ISBA/CCBA Joint CLE Program. 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Thursday, 04-19-18 – LIVE Webcast—Interns and Externs: Training, Supervision and Professionalism Issues. Presented by LEAC. 12:00-2:00.

Friday, 04-20-18 – ISBA Chicago Regional Office—The Cyborgs are Coming! Ethical Concerns from Technology Disruptions. Master Series presented by the ISBA. 9:00 AM – 12:45 PM.

Friday, 04-20-18 – LIVE Webcast—The Cyborgs are Coming! Ethical Concerns from Technology Disruptions. Master Series presented by the ISBA. 9:00 AM – 12:45 PM.

Tuesday, 04-24-18 – Webinar—The Next Level of Excel for Legal Professionals. Practice Toolbox Series. 12:00-1:00 PM.

Thursday and Friday, 04-26-18 and 04-27-18, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—5th Annual Elder Law Bootcamp: Basics and Beyond. Presented by Elder Law. Thursday 8:45AM-4:30PM and Friday 8:45AM-1:00 PM.

May

Thursday, 05-03-18 – Webinar—Introduction to Legal Research on Fastcase. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association – Complimentary to ISBA Members only. 12:00-1:00 pm.

Thursday and Friday, 05-03 to 05-04, 2018 – ISBA Chicago Regional Office—17th Annual Environmental Law Conference. Presented by Environmental Law. All day.

Tuesday, 05-08-18 – Webinar—Starting, Merging, or Closing a Law Firm. Practice Toolbox Series. 12:00-1:00 PM.

Wednesday, 05-09-18 – George W Duanne Cook County Building—The Anatomy of a Mechanics Lien Claim.

Presented by Construction Law. All day.

Thursday, 05-10-18 Webinar—Advanced Tips for Enhanced Legal Research on Fastcase. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association – Complimentary to ISBA Members only. 12:00-1:00 pm.

Friday, 05-11-18 – ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Evidence: Discussions about obtaining evidence, foundation issues, objections and effective presentation to maximize proof. Presented by Civil Practice and Procedure. 8:50-4:30.

Tuesday, 05-15-18 – LIVE Webcast—The Nuts and Bolts of LLC Taxation. Presented by Business and Securities Law. 1:00-3:00 PM

Thursday, 05-17-18 – NIU Naperville—Representing the Elderly Real Estate Client. Presented by Real Estate. 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM.

Thursday, 05-17-18 – Webinar—Fastcase Boolean (Keyword) Search for Lawyers. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association – Complimentary to ISBA Members only. 12:00-1:00 pm.

Friday, 05-18-18 – College of DuPage—Computers for Seniors: The Next Step. Presented by Senior Lawyers. Half-day – morning only.

Tuesday, 05-22-18 – Webinar—Ethics & Professionalism - Everyday Pitfalls. Practice Toolbox Series. 12:00-1:00 PM.

Thursday, 05-24-18 – Bilandic Building, Chicago—Open Meetings Act: Ensuring Public Access to Information. Presented by Government Lawyers. 12:30-5:00 PM.

June

Friday, 06-01-18 – NIU Naperville, Naperville—Solo and Small Firm Practice Institute. All day.

Thursday, 06-07-18 – ISBA Chicago Regional Office—What Comes Next? Emerging Issues for LGBT Clients. Presented by Women and the Law. All Day.

Thursday, 06-07-18 - Webinar—Introduction to Legal Research on Fastcase. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association – Complimentary to ISBA Members only. 12:00-1:00 pm.

Thursday, 06-07-18 – LIVE Webcast—What Comes Next? Emerging Issues for LGBT Clients. Presented by Women and

the Law. All Day.

Friday, 06-08-18 – ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Gain the Edge! * Negotiation Strategies for Lawyers - Marty Latz Negotiations. Master Series Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM. All day.

Tuesday, 06-12-18 – Webinar—Starting a New Firm – What you need to Know. Practice Toolbox Series. 12:00-1:00 PM.

Thursday, 06-14-18 Webinar—Advanced Tips for Enhanced Legal Research on Fastcase. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association – Complimentary to ISBA Members only. 12:00-1:00 pm.

Wednesday and Thursday, 06-20/21-2018 – ISBA Chicago Regional Office—6th Annual Minority Bar Conference. Staff: Meeting Solutions.

Thursday, 06-21-18 – Webinar—Fastcase Boolean (Keyword) Search for Lawyers. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association – Complimentary to ISBA Members only. 12:00-1:00 pm.

Friday, 06-29-18 – O’Fallon—Tips of the Trade: A Federal Civil Practice Seminar for Downstate Illinois. Presented by: Federal Civil Practice. Morning only. ■

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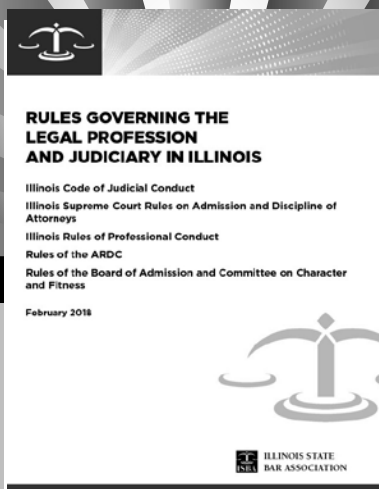
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