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# Building a Practice: COVID-19 Marketing Tips

By Carol Schiro Greenwald





Sometimes it seems there is no time left for marketing. Between working at home and worrying about how to succeed in the new normal, it seems hard to fit in something as mundane as marketing. But we should.

Let's assume we will do 15 to 20 minutes of marketing, networking, and business development activities five days a week. What should we do?



First, begin with a plan. Consider your goals for the rest of 2020 and into 2021. Then focus on networking initiatives that move you closer to your goals. Pick one or two strategies:

- Reinforce your brand with activities that showcase your knowledge, such as writing, speaking, or joining online conversations in a substantive way.
- Reinforce your network by filling in weak sections and connecting with people you haven't been in touch with lately.
- Reinforce your bottom line by refocusing on your clients and those potential clients you were developing relationships with in February 2020.

Continuing on, we highlight some tactics to move these strategies forward.

## Reaching Out to Clients

### Current Clients

Hopefully, everyone is touching base with clients to see how we can help them move forward during and after COVID-19. What is important here is that you be sincere in caring about their welfare and authentic in the way you offer to help.

Ask interesting questions. "How are you doing?" is probably getting to be a bit trite and stale, so instead why not ask:

- What is the first thing you plan to do when lockdown ends?
- How will social distancing requirements impact your work?
- What will you miss most when our stay-at-home orders are lifted?

Interesting, unexpected questions can lead to extraordinary conversations. You can gain insights that help you deepen relationships. People tend to extrapolate from general conversations to an opinion about how you will act if they hire you. Consider these talks to be complimentary examples of your abilities as an insightful advisor.

Prepare your clients with active matters for the new normal. Review with them where you will be able to move forward and where the backlog will impede their case. Explain to them how you will be complying with your state's directives concerning compliance with COVID-19 precautions. Thank them for their patience and express joy at the opportunity to continuing working with them.

One of the best ways to make your client relationships collaborative is to ask questions about their communication preferences. How do they want to connect with their lawyer? Any special time of day? How often do they want to be included in matter decisions? Asking the questions makes clients feel valued. Their responses give you a chance to explain your preferences and set initial communication expectations for everyone.

As you resume working with each client, ask these questions again; remote working realities may have changed the client's preferences. You will be able to provide more appropriate client service if you understand their work environment and how it will impact your work with them. Ask them how they want to connect, collaborate, and share. Clients will appreciate your consideration, and you will find your relationship with them more rewarding.

Finally, consider ways technology can make your client connections easier for both of you. Have you updated your privacy and security precautions so that you can send documents safely to clients wherever they are working? Did you add a capability to accept credit cards? Are you using the most up-to-date apps to make your client service seamlessly effective? Making life easier for clients makes work more productive for you.

### Former Clients

Don't let the focus on current clients obscure the fact that former clients are important, too. They can be:

- Important referral sources.
- Potential collaborators on marketing or legal projects.
- A source of future business.

Reaching out to them now is a "give to get" way to reconnect with people you probably didn't mean to drop in the first place.

During COVID-19 I have used some of my non-commuting time to clean out old files. Whenever I come across clients I liked, I send an e-mail that begins by telling them how I came upon their name and then asks how they are doing. I end the e-mails with the classic networking "give to get" question: "How can I help you?" Then I ask them if they would like to reconnect by phone or video conference. No matter their response, I feel good about reaching out.

## Refreshing Your Network

Often our contacts list becomes tilted toward our present interests. A perfect contacts database would not only cover the present but also include people who represent different past or future aspects of our lives. I decided to cross-check my LinkedIn connections against the members of my in-person networking groups. I was appalled to discover that more than half of them were not online friends.

I have been using my 15 minutes a day to rectify this oversight. I first go to their LinkedIn profiles and ask them to link to me. At the same time, I read their profiles—and usually find new common interests. Following up on my new knowledge leads to conversations that usually deepen our relationship. While I am on the site, I am also reviewing my own 1000+ connections, looking for people I lost touch with accidently. Are there people on your contacts list whom you inadvertently dropped or others with whom you regularly interact who are not part of your online community? It feels good to close loops or reopen dialogue.

## Turning Conversations into Action

As you talk to people, listen for common themes. First, make sure your website is in sync with today's realities. Does it acknowledge the pandemic uncertainties? Does it relate to your clients' pain points? If not, add a paragraph to the home page. If your practice area is one of those strongly impacted by the pandemic-focused laws, be sure to provide advice geared to your clients as opposed to general, newspaper article-like advice. Clients want you to understand them.

In addition, use what you've learned to write a client alert, blog, or LinkedIn post that focuses on solutions to a common conversation point. Make yourself a knowledgeable, constructive part of the discussion. Or take time to participate in LinkedIn or other listserv group discussions. Easiest of all, share something you've read with your contacts. Just make sure to add an introductory line explaining what they should focus on in the article and why you think it is relevant to your conversations with them.

One of the major themes of pandemic wellness articles is "paying it forward." As you listen to people talk about what made them feel good during "shelter in place," you may find a way to help your community. Working for the common good not only makes everyone feel better, it also profiles you in a positive way.

## Conclusion

As you connect during these unsettling times, try to be there emotionally as well as intellectually. Let your contacts see who you are and what you care about. Use 15 minutes a day to position yourself positively in their minds, and you will feel more confident and constructive yourself.

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