



PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

WHAT MARKETING PROCESSES DO I NEED TO UNDERSTAND?

© Pippa Blakemore - The PEP Partnership LLP

May 2010

.....and what systems and procedures do I need to underpin a successful marketing strategy, with maximum results but minimum bureaucracy?

A successful marketing strategy is based on a comprehensive understanding of the marketing process, is built on streamlined systems and is supported by simple procedures, to produce maximum results.

Understanding the marketing processes on which effective systems are based

Approximately 60% - 80% of your work comes from current clients. Therefore, the marketing process has to incorporate the different ways of winning work from these sources. Regular and open contact with current clients ensures that you are on hand to be given new work, at any time a client needs you to do it. The marketing process requires a structured plan to keep in touch with every current and past client.

The remaining 20% - 40% comes from new clients. The chronological marketing process for winning work from new clients develops from random contacts, to targeted contacts which you can then categorise into hot; medium; and tepid leads. It takes approximately 6 - 8 contacts with a prospective client to win work. The marketing process then requires regular, varied and creative communication with these “hot leads” in order that they finally become clients or referrers. The systems and procedures need to be based on this process in order to support your successful marketing strategy.

Streamlined and efficient marketing systems

Random marketing, such as talking to people everywhere including trains, planes and queues, are unpredictable but can and do result in instructions. The systems therefore need to incorporate all random contacts and information about them into a marketing database. This database can be electronic but does not have to be. It can also be a central spreadsheet into which people add their contacts which can then be categorised by name; firm or organisation; date of meeting; interests; reasons to keep in contact and the way forward with each lead.

Targeted marketing can be made more effective by a system which incorporates all similar information about the sources of your most fruitful clients and your most fruitful referrers.

Marketing events need to be included in the system. This will involve identifying which events were attended, how many people attended them, number of contacts resulting and whether they ultimately led to work. These events might be sector, industry or local events.

Value of contacts: evaluating the effectiveness of each contact with an individual should also be included in the system. So that you are able to calculate the number of times you need to contact somebody; the nature of the contact; the strength of the reason to keep in touch with them and whether they ultimately instruct you or refer other people to you. This means that as random and focused contacts are entered into the system you can calculate their potential value.

Pitches and competitive tenders: systematically keep a record of pitches or competitive tenders for which you bid. Keep a record of every new business meeting – formal or informal - that you and your partners attend. Keep a record of which ones you won and why; which ones you lost and why; and all the feedback you received. The system also should incorporate the dissemination of this information to everybody else in the firm.

A Client Relationship Partner for each client, potential client and referrer is a fundamental part of an efficient system. The client relationship partner is responsible for ensuring client satisfaction, the creation of a marketing plan, managing expectations, feedback on work and the way forward with that client.

Feedback meeting results with current clients should be incorporated in the system. Meetings with the current clients are essential to find out what the clients like, what to do differently next time and what their plans for the future are. Their plans for the future will be the discussion that generates ideas for the way in which your firm can help them in the future. They will give you ideas on how to develop and strengthen the long-term relationship, how to add value and ultimately to increase profitability.

Trigger points of when you have a reason to keep in touch with past, dormant and current clients can be systematised. For example, buying a house – send a “Welcome to Your New Home” card; six months after they have settled in, suggest a revised Will discussion; new babies mean new wills; and house extensions and drives may require help with planning permission.

Appraisals should systematically incorporate marketing objectives and targets. These need to be extracted from the appraisal and put into the marketing strategy. The system should analyse, evaluate and measure activity of marketing including who is marketing; where they are marketing; the frequency of their marketing; the regularity and effectiveness of follow-up; the results of any debriefings in terms of financial and client building, i.e. the conversion rate and follow-through from initial contact to a client or referrer.

The system can then analyse your most fruitful clients; your most beneficial referrers and your most active and effective marketers in their different areas of preference, such as networking; presentations and article writing.

Cross selling opportunities will emerge from this input and analysis, which will mean that you will be able to introduce the most effective marketing strategy possible for your firm.

User-friendly procedures to make each stage of the system effective

There needs to be a series of procedures which reflect the process of marketing and underpin the systems such as the three key elements below:

Asking for business cards at events which your lawyers attend is a key part of building relationships. When your lawyers have met individuals, after an event, they need to write on the back of the card, the date of the event; what it was; where it was; what they talked about; with whom; any key points of interest and any agreed way forward. The information on the cards (within the bounds of the Data Protection Act) can be input into a contact management system if it is on a computer or onto a central spreadsheet if you do not have an electronic contact database.

A personal marketing plan for everybody is an important part of the procedure of making a marketing strategy work. This does not need to be complex or more than one page. It is important to have targets so that every lawyer and the firm knows what the individual lawyer is aiming for as part of the firm's marketing strategy and there is a means of measuring success so that there is objective feedback on the effectiveness of the marketing plan.

A cost benefit analysis of every activity is a useful procedure to evaluate the effectiveness of each activity. This does not need to be complex but a one page evaluation which includes: what the activity is; how it forms part of the marketing strategy; what the objectives of the events are within the context of the strategy; who will be invited; why they are going to be invited; total cost of the event; expected outcomes; measurements of success including the number of attendees, whether they were decision-makers and the number of cards which everybody asked for, from the people that they met.

Conclusion

The marketing process needs to be broken down into specific units so that each element of the system reflects each of those units in order to support it. Every part of the system needs to have procedures attached to it, in order to prepare for it, implement it as effectively as possible and evaluate the results afterwards. Lots of activity and money thrown at marketing events will be wasted without effective follow up.

My next article will look at how to make sure the strategy works and how you can maximise the effectiveness of the systems and procedures, in order to ensure that they give the maximum results with maximum support of everybody in the firm.



© Pippa Blakemore - The PEP Partnership LLP

May 2010

Tel: 01189 310688

Email: pippa.blakemore@pep-partnership.co.uk

Web: www.pep-partnership.co.uk