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Seven Marketing Strategies In A Downturn Don't Cut, Use Your Mouth and Get Social

By Heather Smith
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DENVER — Creative marketing techniques and strategies are surfacing as many law firms scramble to get the best for their buck during the economic downturn.

Bob Weiss, founder, president and CEO of the Denver marketing firm Alyn-Weiss & Associates, has been handling marketing for law firms for more than 20 years. He said it is too early to tell how law firms are reacting to the economy with regards to marketing.

“The drop was so precipitous in the fall and depth and so unanticipated that law firms are now just getting their hands around the new and best manner in which to market,” he said.

Law Week Colorado talked to Weiss, as well as LaSheita Sayer, founder and chief marketing officer for ZoZo Marketing Group in Denver, and Lisa Simon, chief marketing officer for Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck and immediate past president of the Legal Marketing Association, to sort through the best marketing techniques and strategies for today's dwindling economy.

1 More Is Better

While some may consider a cut in advertising costs, research suggests otherwise.

Today's economy is arguably the worst it has been since the late 1920s. Roland S. Vaile studied 200 companies through the

recession and found that those with the highest sales were the ones that advertised the most. This research was published in the *Harvard Business Review* in April 1927. After several recessions that occurred during the late 1940s to the early 1960s, Buchen Advertising determined that companies that cut back on advertising during the recession saw a drop in sales and profits. And, McGraw Hill performed research during the 1981 to 1982 recession and found advertising during the recession increased sales by 275 percent by 1985.

“It's not time – from a marketing standpoint – to jump into the bomb shelter,” Weiss said.

Law firms that cut back on marketing in the bad times will be behind when the good times come around again. They could lose their market share to the firms that continue to advertise because clients are less expensive to acquire, in terms of both expense and time, Weiss said.

“Then when the economy recovers, those firms have a larger slice of their business and recover quickly,” he said.

Recessions, Sayer says, typically “shake out the weaker, less persevering companies.”

2 You Are The Solution

Most people are worried or concerned about the economy, and the clients of law firms are no different. Sayer said attorneys have to stay positive, not too extreme or “happy-go-lucky,” but enough to help, without adding

Period Studied	Author or Sponsor	Conclusion
1920s recession	Vaile, <i>Harvard Business Review</i>	Biggest sales increases come from companies that increase advertising.
1949, 1954, 1958, 1961 recessions	Buchen Advertising	Companies that cut advertising during recession experience dropped sales and profits.
1970 recession	ABP and Meldrum & Fewsmith	Increased advertising during recession leads to sales or profit advantages (or both) in years following recession.
1974-75 recession	ABP and Meldrum & Fewsmith	Companies that maintain advertising during recession experience higher sales and net income during and after recession.
1974-75 recession	McGraw-Hill	Advertising during recession creates 132% subsequent five-year sales growth.
1981-1982	McGraw-Hill	Advertising during 1981-1982 recession creates 275% sales growth by 1985.

CHART INFORMATION COURTESY OF LASHEITA SAYER

stress.

“Stay in an advisor role,” Sayer said. “You want to present yourself as being sound and capable of finding a solution. You want to position yourself as a solution or a partner to finding a sound solution.”

The best way to accomplish this is to know your client's needs; which brings us to...

3 You Have A Mouth. Use It!

Getting to know your client's needs is an essential part to ad-

vertising, but just sending an e-mail won't cut it.

“Pick up the phone,” Sayer said. “Do some online research about them and speak confidently about what you have found out. Say, ‘I heard this about you...’ or ‘I read this...’ They want to know you care. And, if you aren't going to take the time, someone else will.”

Many people today are forgetting to not only talk to their clients, but to listen as well.

“Effective marketing means having the strategic conversa-

MARKETING

wrote in an e-mail. "In down economic times when budgets need to be cut, marketing and business development needs to be more focused and streamlined."

Surveys also have become an effective way to determine clients' needs, but Sayer stressed that actually speaking to clients either on the phone or in person is important.

"If you aren't staying in touch with your clients, you aren't really giving them a good service," she said. "Understand what their business problems are and what you can help them prepare for."

4 Make New Friends, But Keep The Old

Everyone knows the childhood rhyme, about how one is silver, and the other gold. But, too often people forget this life-long lesson.

"Go back in your calendars 18 to 24 months and identify the other lawyers and professionals you used to be in contact regularly with, but no longer are," Weiss said. "It's time to go back to those people and ask them what



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they are doing, what they have set as their goals and what you have been doing lately."

This is something every professional should do, not just lawyers. It is one of the "most productive" strategies, Weiss said.

"The reason it works is because you established a personal and professional equity with them when you were working with them, and you are just going back and recapping that," he said.

5 One Word: Networking

Networking is easier than ever with the rise of the Internet, BlackBerries, iPhones and countless networking websites. Social media marketing, as it is termed, is growing in popularity, and one Website that Weiss thinks is a great resource is LinkedIn.

"Everybody should be on LinkedIn," he said. "It's work to develop a profile and manage a network, but since most of us are a little less busy than we were a year ago, lawyers have the time

to do it."

The Pew Research Center recently found that the average age of people on LinkedIn is 40, Weiss said. "It's Facebook for professionals."

"It's time to redouble marketing efforts, but in light of the fact that money is tight, you are really redoubling personal networking efforts," he said.

Sayer agrees that social media marketing is an effective way for law firms to post their problems, goals and projects and get a quick response back from marketing professionals who want their business.

6 Get Educated

For those of you who do not know how to utilize social media marketing, Sayer said almost every week there is at least one marketing association doing something that has to do with the medium.

Search Engine Marketing Professionals (SEMPO) is an online social media marketing group and one of the associations that organizes informational meetings. The next event is scheduled for Feb.19 at 3 p.m., and will feature a presentation by Quark,

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Sayer said.

More information about the event can be found at: <http://www.zozogroup.com/sempo.shtml>.

7 Think Outside the Cliché

There are other ways to advertise aside from the traditionally-thought-of television, broadcast, print or internet advertisements. One way is through sponsorship.

"Participate in community events," Sayer said. "It's knowing where your target audience is going to be. They also have lives outside of work, so don't only reach them at work, reach them in their personal lives, too."



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