

# **So Why Can't I Market?**

## **How Women Lawyers Can Win the Marketing Game**

From the President's Column in the July 2007  
newsletter of the Georgia Association for Women Lawyers

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Marketing remains the elusive, but desperately sought, holy grail for women lawyers. Successful marketing gives women independence in their jobs, and, according to Deborah Graham, in Marketing for Women Lawyers, it makes them twice as likely to be satisfied with their careers.

Yet – statistics also show that women don't market. Why not? The number one reason women don't market, surprisingly enough, is that they don't know they are supposed to. I am a prime example of this problem! I spent years in my field – plaintiff's personal injury – working on cases that got handed to me. It never occurred to me that I ought to market. I was too busy to market! Only later, when I wanted to work on my own, did I realize how blind I had been for many years.

Unfortunately, I was probably not alone among women lawyers. According to a 1995 survey by *Inside Litigation*, men think about business development earlier, and act on it. A full 90.6% of male associates brought in new business, while only 50.9% of women associates did.

This obvious disparity highlights the second problem for women: women lawyers don't seem to understand the importance of marketing. Like me, many women believe they will succeed if they simply do their work well, without marketing. Several factors may play into why women don't understand the need to market. Women lawyers may lack mentors to tell them they ought to market. Women also may tend to avoid the political side of career advancement. And finally, women may lack business savvy; they may not have long-range strategies for their careers.

The bottom line is that women lawyers may know they ought to market, but still not do it. If you are in the same boat with the rest of us, it may be comforting to know – well, sort of – that it's not all in your mind. Women do face real obstacles to marketing.

**Women face both internal and external obstacles to marketing.**

Internally, women may play the blame game, blaming themselves when they fail at marketing, not realizing that only a small percentage of *anyone's* marketing efforts succeed. “[W]omen tend to internalize their failures while men externalize theirs; thus, men who get rejected by clients will, more likely than not, blame the client or ‘bad luck’ while women will blame themselves. Because they see their rejection as confirming their weaknesses or worst suspicions about themselves, it is harder for women to bounce back from losing – or even to compete for clients in the first place.” Graham, Rainmaking for Women Lawyers, at 100.

Women also may feel uncomfortable with rainmaking. Initiating and maintaining social relationships with men who have business to distribute may be uncomfortable, and using personal relationships for business purposes may seem unseemly and wrong. Self-promotion may seem like bragging.

Women also face external obstacles to marketing. Gender bias can be real, and may be even more acute inside law firms, where lawyers believe they are impervious to discrimination. Work assignments may be different for women and men. Bad work assignments, of course, can prevent women from getting work experience that allows them to market effectively, may hurt work evaluations, and may limit exposure to clients and other lawyers in the firm. Women may not get credit when they share the work in business development, and they may find themselves excluded from informal marketing activities, especially socializing with clients.

The good news, though, is that women lawyers can learn marketing. The first step is to realize that you are in charge of your own career. In school, you get assignments. When school ends, you not only have to complete the assignments, sometimes you have to figure out what they are.

The second step is to set business goals you will use to assess your progress. The third step is to learn – actively learn -- how to market. And finally, you will have to commit the time to market. According to the Inside Litigation survey, 30.1% of men spend 175+ hours on marketing each year, while only 17.7% of women spend that much time. Ask yourself whether “I don't have enough time” has become an excuse to avoid what you don't

want to do, anyway. Remind yourself that in the long run, you don't have time *not* to market.

Finally, commit yourself to following the "200 hours, four years" rule. The concept is simple: if you spend 200 hours marketing (wisely) each year for four years, you will have the business you need.

To be successful in law, and just to be happy in law, you will need to market. But the good news is that you will succeed at marketing, if you work at it.

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