

# ASK THE COACH: Marketing as a junior

By Gary Mitchell; Managing Director, GEM Communications Inc.

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Welcome to the first Ask the Coach column. I would like to start off by thanking the lawyers who sent in questions. The following question or variations of it, is perhaps the most widely asked one from my experience and that is why I chose to start this column with it.

**“I am a junior lawyer, 2nd year call at a mid-sized law firm. How do I begin to market myself without overselling my experience or lack thereof? What approach should I take, and should I be even worried about business development?”**

I always like to think of challenges as presenting us with opportunities. Your challenge is how do you go about marketing yourself when you don't feel you have enough experience or expertise to offer your clients. OK, fair enough. I see an opportunity here and that is to get your *'marketing legs'* by marketing your firm and selling it first.

Think of your practice as a 'franchise' of your firm. You can start your marketing efforts by leveraging all the value that your firm has to offer; the firm's brand, name, history, prominence in the market place and so on. You can also leverage the knowledge and skills of your senior lawyers at your firm. Make the most of their expertise. When you are out networking, you focus on selling your firm and not your own practice. That way, you can still be bringing in new business or the firm and at the same time practicing your marketing and sales tactics for when you are ready to market yourself.

This approach will require you to become an expert on articulating your firm's brand promise and vision. Learn its history, strategic approach, mission statement, long-term marketing goals, the experience of the various lawyers, and how your firm stacks up to it's competition in the market place. Be sure to

know what your firm has that the others don't. Learn everything there is to know about your firm and become effective at articulating it.

Far too often I hear of junior lawyers going after the "big guns" when they are networking. If you are starting out in your career it doesn't make much sense to be targeting professionals who are senior in their careers. Most senior professionals would have built long-term relationships with people that grew up with them in their careers. So look to meet people around your own age and career path with growth potential. Down the road as these relationships grow, so too do the responsibilities and decision making power of your leads. By the time that you are on the partnership track and required to bring in new business, you will have an extensive network to work from. You will also find it easier to relate to people and this will lead you to a better ability and comfort level in finding and building relationships.

Should you be marketing at such an early stage of your career, the answer is YES. Let's differentiate between marketing and sales.

***Get your 'marketing legs' by marketing your firm and selling it first.***



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Marketing is about identifying leads, and sales is about finding a need and providing a solution. So the first step is to find potential people of interest (marketing). This can take time. Once you have identified someone who could benefit from the service of yourself or other lawyers at your firm, you then build a relationship with that person allowing you to create trust and at the same time find the need, or how you can help that person. And that too takes time.

So, it is never too early to start building long-term relationships, even as a junior lawyer. Start now, and it will ease some of the pressure you are going to feel later in your career. Imagine the network you can create over the next several years. I hope that helps. Until next time ...

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