

Law Firm Marketing

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Spearheading: A 12-Step Program

Getting lawyers on side with new marketing ideas can be a challenge, requiring some savvy negotiating of office politics. A few simple steps can ease the process

If you are like most marketing professionals working in law firms, you have your share of bruises from banging your head against the wall — the lawyer wall, that is. Have you ever had a plan that has been approved, and then when you try to act upon it, it stalls? You are not alone. Engaging lawyers and implementing new ideas, programs, policies or approaches is a challenge faced by all law-firm management. Here's a "12-step program" that will help you bring down the wall and start to get things done.

STEP 1: Get to know your lawyers. This may seem obvious, but from my experience, marketers who are successful in engaging and implementing initiatives within their firms know their lawyers very well. Get to know what they like, what they don't like, their strengths, weaknesses, career goals and what drives or motivates them.

STEP 2: Get your managing partner on side. In the ideal scenario, before starting any new initiative, you would ensure your managing partner agrees with your approach. Now, if you know for a fact this won't happen and still feel very strongly that your plan, policy or approach

is imperative, then skip this step (for now) and come back to it once you have some proven results.

STEP 3: Identify early adopters. These are the people more likely to embrace change. How will you know who they are?

Early adopters are very driven in their careers and willing to take on new approaches to achieve their goals. They will be willing to do things differently. Look for colleagues with vision — the ones who can see the future and are willing to get ahead of it.

STEP 4: Launch a pilot project. With your early adopters, create small pilot groups to test your idea. It's easier to increase the size of your effort over time after achieving success.

STEP 5: Facilitate their success. Give the pilot group members what they need to accomplish their goals. This may include outside consultants or coaches. Remember, these lawyers will be leading change — and that is not easy. In many cases they will be entering uncharted territory. To move your program to the next stage, it's imperative that they succeed.

STEP 6: Find management support. Seek like-minded management members who are on side with your vision. Engage them in the process and look to them to help identify the appropriate people to pilot these new programs. If you are the only one leading this change, you are more likely to be thought of

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as a rebel or an outsider. Create a team of people willing to support you; there is more power in numbers.

STEP 7: Measure success. Have a system in place to gauge wins and losses. Your system could be as simple as defining the questions that need to be answered in order to measure success. What has changed? How has this impacted on the bottom line? Are more lawyers effectively engaged in business development?

STEP 8: Articulate achievements. Results have a wonderful way of influencing change. Decide who needs to know what, and then articulate the program's success. Be clear on what has been accomplished and how and why it makes sense. Express the measurements and how they affect the various outcomes you desire. Regular and consistent communication about results will make or break your longer-term vision.

STEP 9: Conduct a second pilot. Building on the success of the first pilot, choose the next group of lawyers to work with — lawyers who will embrace change, now that they've seen others who've been successful at it. Follow the same steps as outlined above. Seek the support of the first group of lawyers to help identify and mentor this second group. You will begin to notice "organic" teams developing. As like-minded lawyers begin to work with each other, they will be speaking the same language and following the same approaches.

STEP 10: Get buy-in from firm management. You may have

included your managing partner at the onset of this program.

If you haven't (because you were waiting for results first) then bring him or her in now. Demonstrate the value of the program with

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the results you have already achieved. Get his or her buy in. Once that happens, have your managing partner present the program to the managing committee or whomever the decision makers are at your firm. When all this is assembled, you'll have a vision, a clear roadmap of how to get there, an army of generals on your side to champion the cause and results and proof — with all this, it will be very difficult for them not to come on side.

STEP 11: Articulate the vision. In preparing to roll out the program on a firm-wide basis, it's imperative that everyone understands the value proposition here. So now it's time to share the vision, or the "big picture." Design the presentation so that every member of your team will be able to see themselves in this new model. They'll be able to understand what it will mean for their own practice and career. They'll see the results and will have witnessed the change in behaviour among their peers. Champion the early adopters throughout your firm as examples of what is possible. They are your new role models. Some of them will even

emerge as the next generation of leadership and not only support your vision for change — they will demand it. Remember, your early adopters will lead the change efforts, so you're not alone.

STEP 12: Implement your program. You have proven results. You have built your army, and you have your generals (practicegroup leaders) in place to champion the cause. Now the firm will be far more prepared to accept change. You can roll out your program on a larger scale with the full confidence that, from demonstrating success in incremental stages, and with continuous communication throughout the program, the results will be far greater than they would have been if you had gone it alone. And policy changes will be a lot easier to make now that a greater number of your lawyers have changed their behaviour. When you are talking about getting people to do things differently, it requires behavioural change. Behavioural change does not happen overnight. Plant the seeds of change without upsetting the apple cart — and look forward to harvest time.



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