

THE LAW FIRM OF THE FUTURE

What Every Managing Partner Needs to Know About Marketing and Business Development

June 21, 2023

by

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President - Legal Marketing Association

Director of Marketing, Clark Hill

Susan Slifer

Principal, Edge International

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MPF WEBINAR

POWERED BY

TheRemsenGroup
Smart Strategies for the Forward Thinking Law Firm

TheRemsenGroup.com

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Roy Sexton leads Clark Hill's marketing, branding, and communications efforts in collaboration with the firm's exceptional team of marketing and business development professionals. He has nearly 20 years of experience in marketing, communications, business development, and strategic planning.

Roy is passionate about problem solving, facilitating business growth, crafting communications strategy, and enhancing law firm culture. He works closely with the marketing team to advance the firm's digital and social media presence and external engagement, using multi-channel distribution and data collection. This enables the team to quantify results and use those results to produce thoughtfully and strategically organized content for clients and prospects.

Roy also advises attorneys on marketing and business development strategy by curating relationships among external publications and media outlets and creating the appropriate platforms and opportunities for attorneys to promote their knowledge and practice.

He has been heavily involved regionally and nationally in the Legal Marketing Association (LMA) as a board member, content expert, and presenter. He currently serves as the President of LMA.

Roy is a published author of two books: *Reel Roy Reviews, Volumes 1 and 2*.

Education

M.B.A., University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

M.A., Ohio State University-Main Campus, Columbus, Ohio, Theatre

B.A., Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana

Recognitions

Named in *Crain's Detroit* "Notable LGBTQ in Business" in 2021 and "Notable Leader in Marketing" in 2023.

Michigan Lawyers Weekly "Unsung Legal Hero" (2018)

Memberships

Legal Marketing Association, Treasurer (2020-Present)

Legal Marketing Association, Midwest Regional Board, Former Member-at-Large

Social Media SIG, Former Member, Steering Group

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Ann Arbor, Board Member

Royal Starr Film Festival, Board Member

Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit, Board Member

Encore Michigan, Board Member

Leadership Detroit, Graduate

Leadership A2Y, Graduate

Michigan Council of Labor and Economic Growth, Member

Michigan Mortgage Lenders Association Board of Governors

Lee Ashby Watts
ashby & co consulting
Founder & CEO



Lee Ashby Watts has over 20 years of marketing and branding experience, helping both legal professionals and high-achieving executives develop brand clarity and marketing strategy. Lee has worked in legal marketing managing marketing, branding, business development, and public relations. Most recently, she was the Chief Marketing Officer at Smith, Gambrell, and Russell, a global law firm, headquartered in Atlanta, GA.

As the Founder and CEO of ashby & co consulting, Lee consults with hundreds of entrepreneurs and leaders, assisting them with their branding and marketing strategies. Lee is also a Faculty Member for The Academy of Creative Coaches where she teaches branding, public speaking and marketing for those seeking professional coaching certification. She also assists with diversity and inclusion initiatives for several of her clients.

Lee sits on the board of the Legal Marketing Association Southeast. She is also a proud member of the professional women's network CHIEF, the Junior League of Atlanta and ColorComm. Lee is a blogger & contributor for Forbes Communications Council and a regular speaker for the Argyle Network, TechBridge Inc., among other platforms and organizations.

Lee is a graduate of the Executive MBA program at Georgia State University and earned her Bachelor of Arts from Ohio University.

She has a passion for connecting people, ideas, concepts, and thoughts in order to effect change and drive growth. With years of marketing, strategy, and leadership experience, ranging from corporate to non-profits, Lee has discovered her passion for helping "light bulbs" go off and creating "aha" moments in business and strategy.

Susan Slifer

Principal

Edge International, Inc.

Atlanta, Georgia



Susan is a principal at Edge International, a global law firm strategy and consulting firm which she joined after 20+ years in lead (CMBDO) roles for AmLaw and Big 4 firms and heading her own firm for close to a decade.

At Edge, she focuses on BD training/coaching, strategic marketing and communications and client feedback programs, while her experience runs the gamut and includes recognition and awards for websites, communications and branding initiatives.

Susan loves helping firms and people maximize their potential. She's a certified business coach - leading 750+ attorneys and numerous firms to achieve significant revenue growth - and adept at identifying/developing talent.

She holds her BBA and MBA from GSU's business school where she also taught Strategy and related courses. Susan is a member of LMA, SAG/AFTRA and Tocqueville Society (United Way) leadership giving. A former expat and avid traveler - 35+ countries - she loves hiking, lake swimming and her yoga mat.

MPF Webinar Series: The Law Firm of the Future



The MPF Webinar Series: Building the Law Firm of the Future

What Every Managing Partner Needs to Know About Marketing and Business Development

An MPF Webinar with Roy Sexton, Susan Slifer and Lee Watts

June 21, 2023 – 2:00-3:00pm ET



Welcome



Uri Gutfreund

Senior Vice President and Managing Principal, Ames & Gough



John Remsen, Jr.

President and CEO, Managing Partner Forum
President, TheRemsenGroup



MPF Webinar Series: The Law Firm of the Future



Managing Partner Forum®
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Upcoming Programs in 2023

- MPF Webinar Series – Third Wednesdays @ 2pm ET
- The MPF Fall Symposium – October 5, 2023, in Chicago
- *The MPF Weekly* – Friday mornings
- MPF Website – www.ManagingPartnerForum.org



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Today's Webinar

- Today's Topic: **What Every Managing Partner Needs to Know about Marketing and Business Development**
- 102 Managing Partners and Law Firm Leaders
- Registrant Survey Results and Audience Polling Questions
- Recording and Handout Materials
- Your Feedback on Today's Session



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Today's Guests



Roy E. Sexton
President, Legal Marketing Association
Director of Marketing, Clark Hill



Susan Slifer
Principal, Edge International



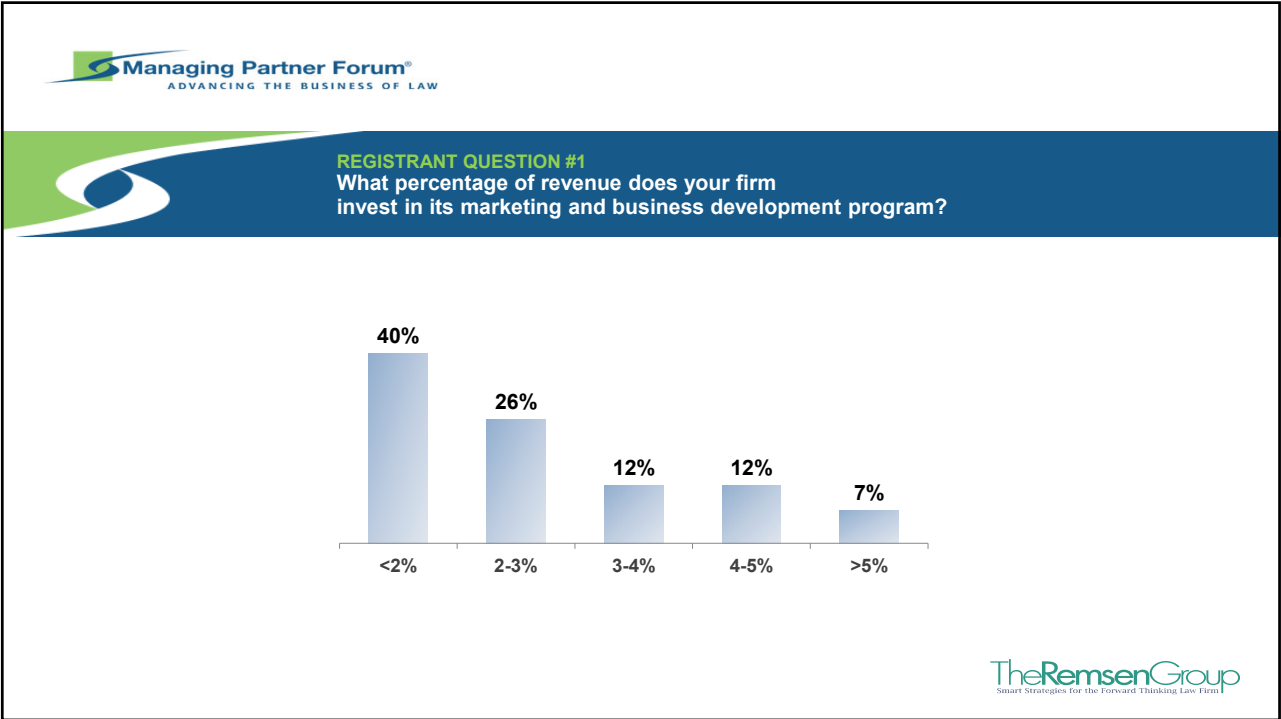
Lee Ashby Watts
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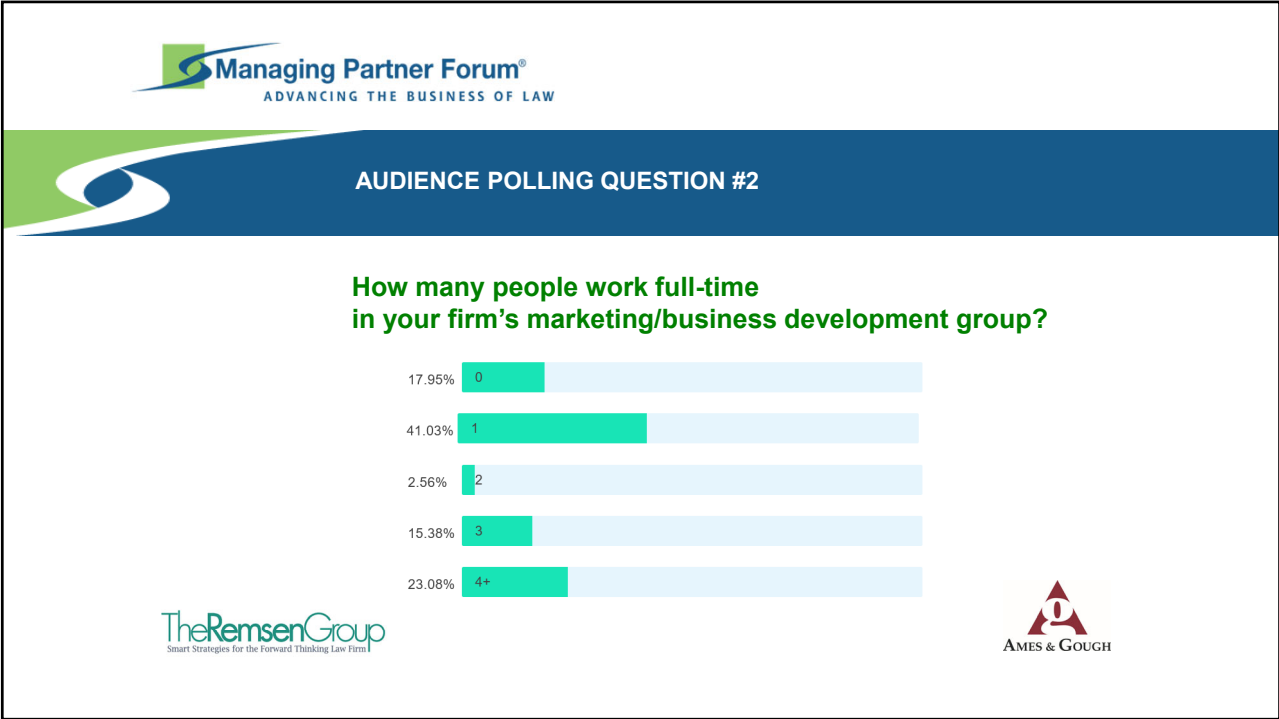


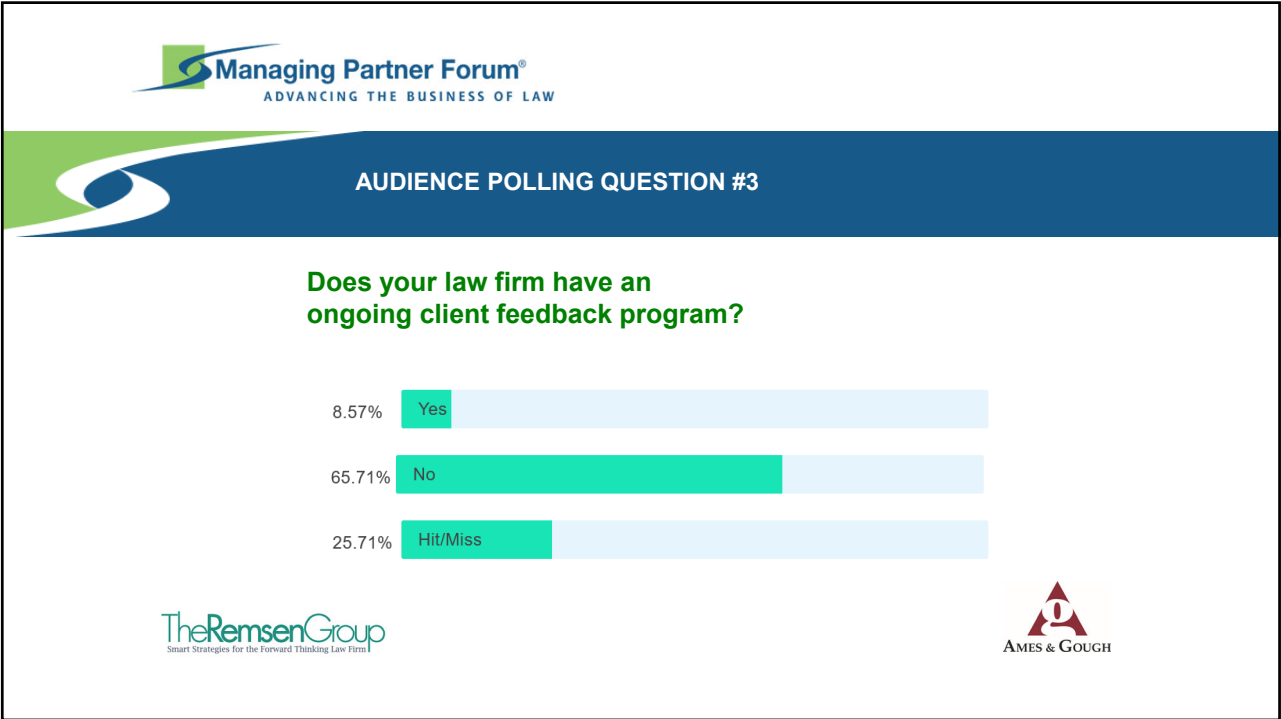
AUDIENCE POLLING QUESTION #1

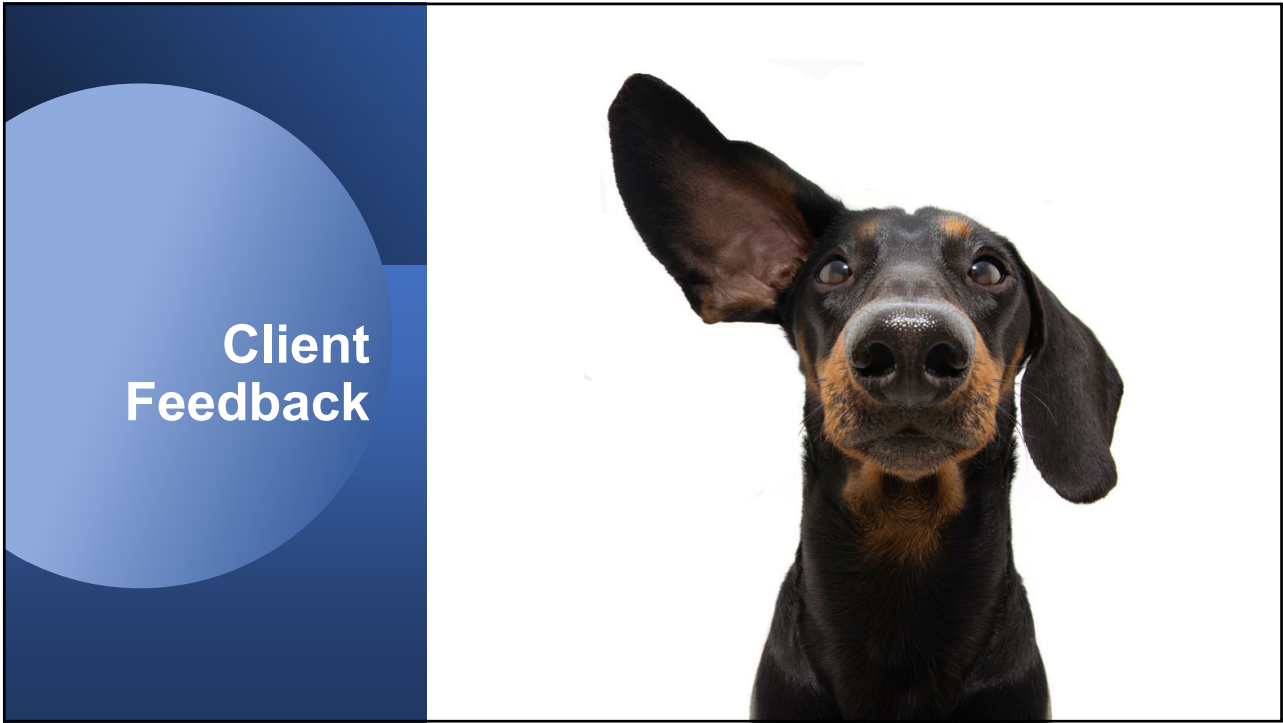
How many lawyers are with your firm?



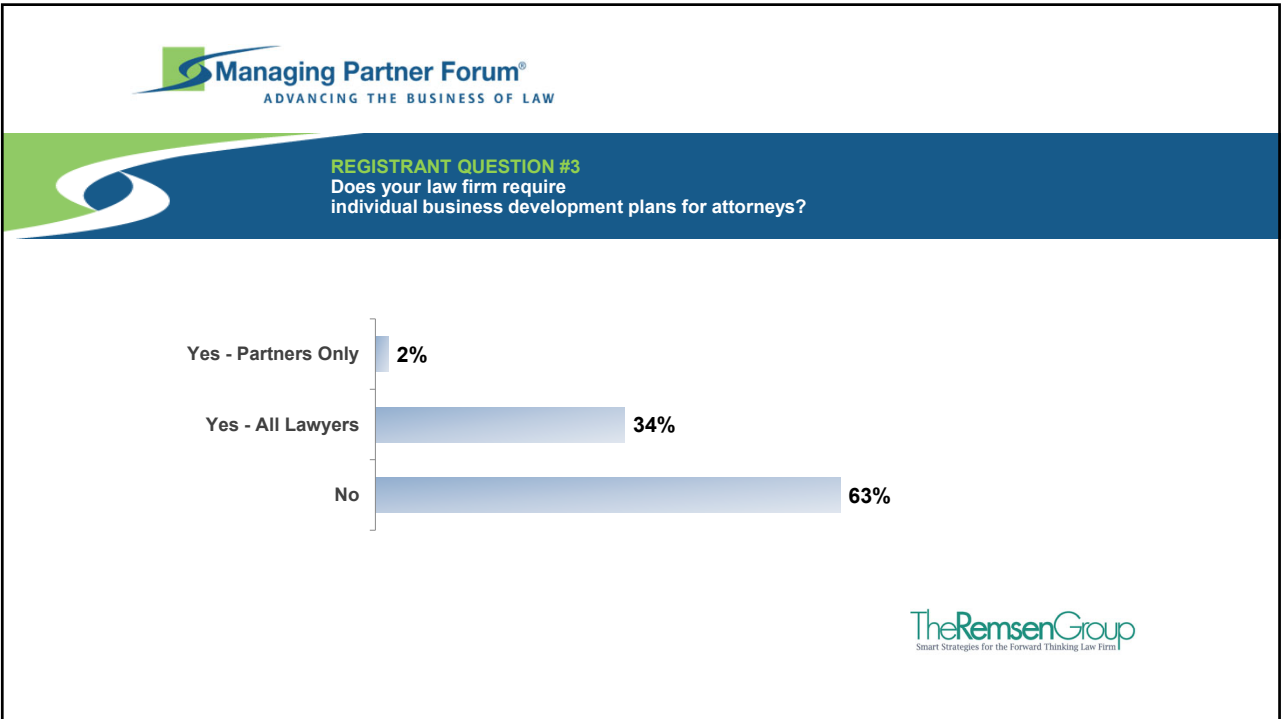
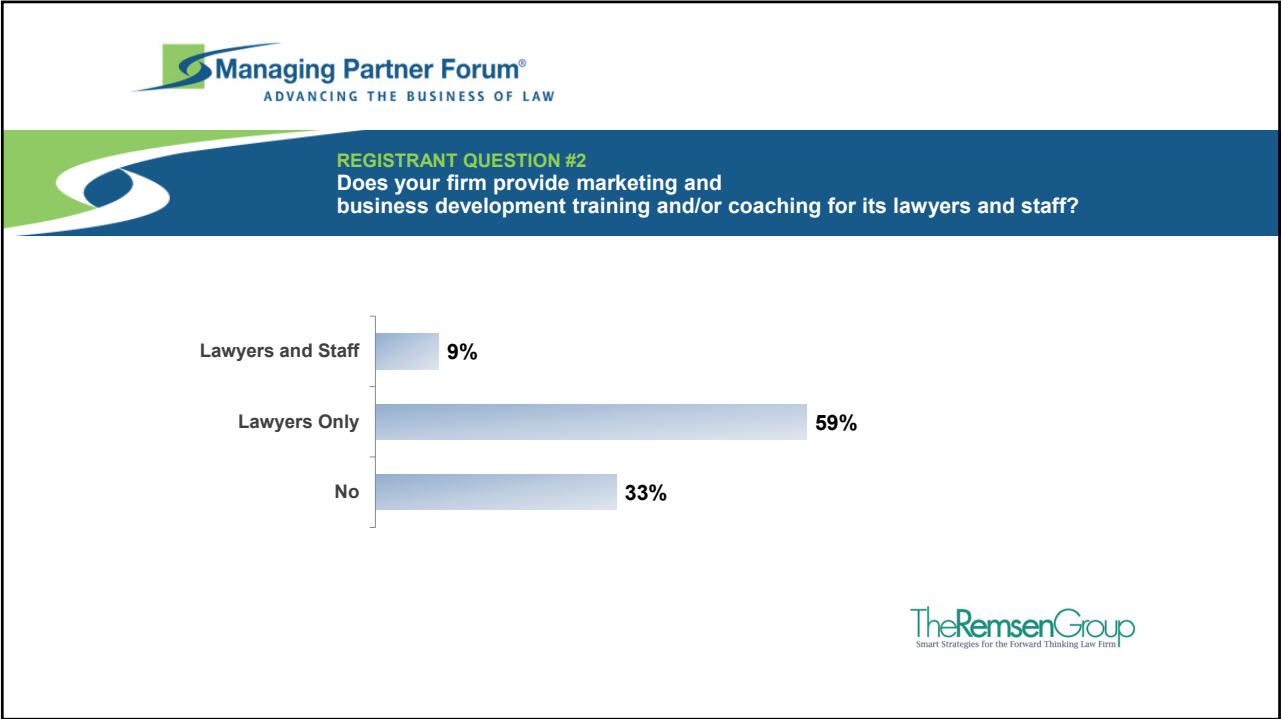


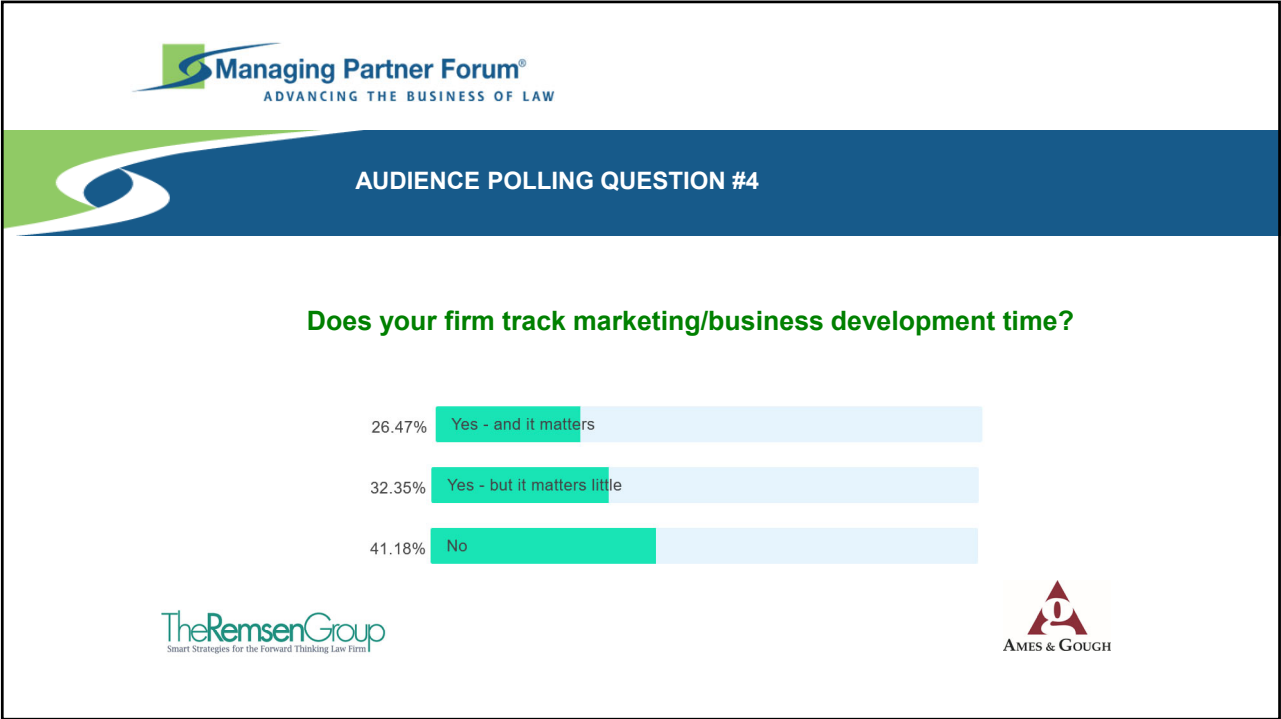


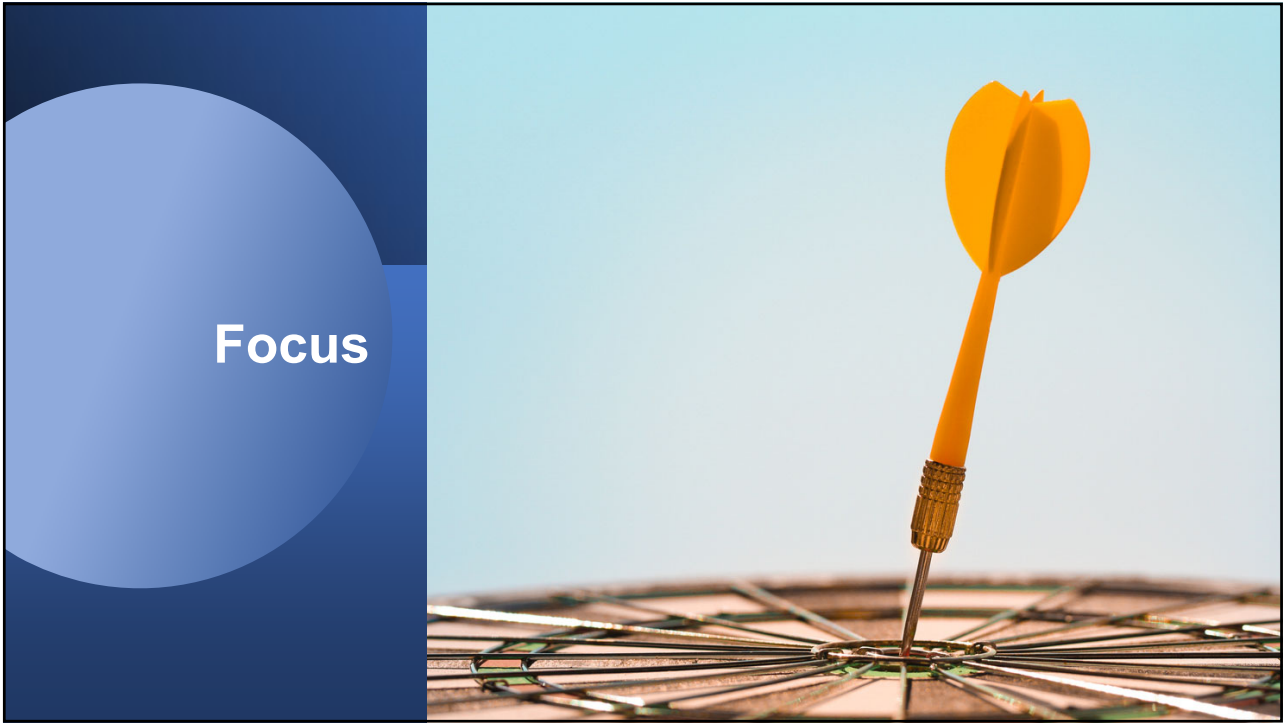




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Important Reminders

- Your Feedback on Today's Session
- On-Demand Recording and Handout Materials
- Next MPF Webinar – The Rising C-Suite – July 19, 2023



Today's Guests



Roy E. Sexton
President, Legal Marketing Association
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ALM

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING A MARKETING AND SALES CULTURE AT YOUR LAW FIRM (Or, How to Make Marketing Really Matter)

By John Remsen, Jr.

Getting lawyers and law firms do things differently is not an easy task and instilling a marketing mindset among lawyers is a major effort for most firms, resembling the proverbial challenge of “herding cats.”

A national consulting firm recently examined personalities of lawyers from around the country using the Caliper personality index and was able to quality what many of us have known for years. Compared to the rest of us, lawyers

- Hate change, respecting precedent because it was drilled into them at law school;
- Are highly skeptical of new ideas and concepts, demanding proof that change will work;
- Love autonomy, preferring their own judgment over that of any hierarchy or policy; and
- Have a high sense of urgency, expecting immediate results on even complex efforts.

It's not surprising, then, that most law firms (especially smaller and mid-size firms) operate much like fraternities. Governance and decision-making are often difficult and time-consuming, because everyone wants a voice in the process. However, the most profitable firms are moving closer to a corporate model of governance, with institutional goals, strong leadership and streamlined governance. They are also starting to embrace marketing, recognizing the need to get closer to existing clients and invest time and resources on focused, proactive strategies to go after new ones.

So why try to roll the marketing boulder uphill? Simply because any firm that wants to survive in today's increasingly competitive marketplace must support a marketing and sales culture. Mergers, acquisitions and consolidations, rising associate salaries and operating costs, and client cost-cutting are making lawyers run their firms more like a business, and less like a profession. Failure to market brings red ink, irrelevance and an “out of business” sign on your door. Marketing is what enables a firm to attract and retain desirable clients, and it puts the firm in a position to fire the ones it no longer wants.

That said, a marketing culture can't be implemented overnight - it must be slowly, gradually fostered through basic, focused, step-by-step efforts. Overcome typical lawyer impatience and resistance by showcasing successful pilot programs. A communications effort that presents the proof, demonstrates a successful result and validates the judgment of the participants, will appeal to lawyers' lemming instinct: “If Jim can do it, so the hell can I!”

The key, then, is to create the initial success that will make everyone in the firm believe marketing matters. I mean *really* matters. As marketing consultant to thousands of lawyers at hundreds of firms, I've seen that ten key

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elements are absolutely crucial to generate marketing momentum. Neglect even one of them and your legacy will be, "We tried *that* before, it didn't work."

1. Find a Passionate Leader. If a firm's leaders - those lawyers who have the most clout and the greatest respect - aren't committed to marketing, no one will be. Convince them that marketing is an investment in tomorrow, not just an expense for today. Cultivate a senior level marketing czar who is passionate about marketing and inspires others. Don't waste your time on naysayers or junior associates. Convince an alpha male, and the herd will follow.

2. Apply Some Structure. Attorneys are the world's worst visualizers. Vague generalizations about how marketing works won't motivate them. Your marketing effort has to involve concrete, tangible benchmarks and requirements that show the firm is serious:

- Set clear expectations for non-billable time devoted to marketing. Set a target of 200 hours a year for partners and 100 hours per year for associates. Overcoming the billable hour fixation is crucial for marketing efforts, which often take years to generate results.
- Incorporate marketing into partnership requirements. Derail the partnership track of grinders who sit at their computers all day and don't have a book of business.
- Create marketing plans at every level - attorney, industry or practice group, the entire firm. The marketing plans should be written, simple and focused, and should set short-term goals (have lunch with two media industry prospects per month) in the pursuit of long-term objectives (double billings with media clients).
- Communicate marketing successes by every tool at your command. Meetings, emails, newsletters, bulletin boards in the lounge, Intranet postings, monthly status reports, and more.
- Monitor marketing performance. Hold the laggards accountable and reward the performers. Most marketing initiatives must be repeated ten or more times over a period of two-plus years before they pay off. Rewarding only the ultimate result isn't enough incentive. Peg some compensation to *efforts* that emphasize and support the marketing plan.
- Eliminate the time and expense wasters. Scrap "random acts of golf and lunch" and "powerful partner pet projects" that don't support firm-wide marketing objectives.

3. Provide Training and Resources. Sales techniques aren't taught in law school. There are, however, plenty of sales training programs for lawyers that emphasize the basics: if you've taken a prospect to lunch seven times, *ask* if you can handle their contract work. One-on-one coaching sessions can be supplemented by attendance at the Marketing Partner Forum and the Legal Marketing Association annual meeting, participation in the LawMarketing listserv, and circulation of marketing newsletters. Help lawyers overcome their marketing insecurities by exposing them to best practices.

4. Create a Forum of Accountability. The best way to generate marketing momentum is through face-to-face discussions - but *not* with marketing at the tail end of a long agenda. Create specific marketing forums where groups of 10 to 20 attorneys can report on their initiatives, share leads and ideas, and be held publicly accountable for their marketing efforts. Meetings should be held at least monthly, scheduled well in advance for a set time and place, with mandatory attendance and a leader committed to marketing in charge. Distribute minutes and make sure the results are publicized through reports, newsletters and retreat presentations. The only way to overcome resistance to these forums is to make clear that they are about results and accountability - and then use them to reinforce both.

5. Invest Time and Money. Every firm's needs are different, but certain rules of thumb apply - for example, one in-house marketer for approximately every 40 lawyers, and a marketing budget roughly equal to 3% of gross revenues. Lawyers in their skepticism will ask, "Is this *really* necessary?" Appeal to the lemming instinct by demonstrating which other firms are doing at least as much.

6. Identify Your A, B and C Clients. Law firms often fail to identify the clients and the business they want, making little differentiation in attorney time and effort between getting the \$5,000 real estate contract and the \$5 million IPO. You should identify your A-List clients, the frequent flyers you really want to encourage, and emphasize winning more business from *these* guys. Then target them: Go visit them at their place of business, solicit their feedback on your services and act on it, invite them to events and seminars, join their trade associations, wine and dine them. Showing that you really do care about them is the essential step to getting more work from them.

7. Focus on Industries, Not Area of Law. Too many law firms practice marketing by trying to market their practice. Clients don't think that way. They focus on their business and industry concerns, and want their law firm to do the same. Competent legal technicians are a dime a dozen; law firms that talk the language of the hospitality industry are valued much more highly. Focusing on industries targeted by your marketing plan prevents wasting time and effort by trying to be all things to all people. It also promotes cross-selling among practices, as you identify which real estate, corporate, tax and other services you can tailor to clients in specific industries.

8. Get an Identity. Emphasize that you're not just another law firm. Making an impression captures share of mind, then share of market. All the effective marketer's tools apply here: a logo, a short and memorable firm name (no more than two words), sharp web site, readable collateral materials that are not mind-numbing exercises in lawyer-ese, email templates with links back to your web site, promotional items that clients will want to use. Remember that a nice brochure or impressive web site constitute just a small part of a *total* marketing effort.

9. Hire "People People." Lawyers are trained to be good communicators before groups, whether juries or boards of directors. They typically aren't good at establishing interpersonal, one-on-one communication. Rather than trying to turn an introverted lawyer into a rainmaker, it makes sense to hire lawyers with a focus on personality as well as on grades and law journal experience. Look for outgoing types who are flexible and embrace change, and they can become missionaries for your marketing efforts. The same applies to everyone in the organization - receptionists, administrative assistants and (yes) marketers.

10. Manage Lawyer Expectations. All the steps that we've discussed here take time, and the marketing plan they support will continue to evolve. Make sure the lawyers at your firm know and understand this from the start. Set a limited number of priorities and don't try to move too far too fast. But make absolutely certain that you deliver everything that you promise - which, in the end, is a good definition of effective marketing.

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About the Author

John Remsen, Jr. is the principal of The Remsen Group, a marketing consulting firm that works exclusively with law firms. He is a Past President of the Southeastern chapter of the Legal Marketing Association and has served on its national Board of Directors. He can be reached at 404.885.9100 or jremsen@theremsendgroup.com.

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