

# How to Motivate Attorneys to Market

Article By:

Deborah Knupp

---

## The Essence of Motivation

Consider that what lies at the heart of many motivational techniques is often a proverbial “carrot” or a “stick”, externally presented by a person of authority in an effort to coerce behavior to a desired outcome. The “carrot – stick” continuum often manifests within law firms through monetary rewards (or not), primo assignments (or not), invitation to partnership (or not) and a measure of “protection” that ebbs and flows with the rising (or falling) tides of the marketplace. The biggest challenge for sustained motivation and momentum with the “carrot – stick” continuum is that it relies largely on managers to consistently keep the motivators present and to be consistent in the reward or consequence when behavior does or doesn’t align with expectations. In essence, “carrot – stick” is a highly management-dependent motivational technique.

A more effective motivation technique is one that emphasizes reflective, intrinsic motivators and places accountability for sustained motivation and momentum on the individual. With this approach, a manager’s job is to create a set of conditions whereby a person can be at their best and sustain energy and momentum to meet (or exceed) expectations. Self-motivation, as it is often referred, is generally the result of three things:

1)

Effective **training** whereby the individual knows **what** to do

2)

Effective **coaching** whereby the individual knows **how** to do what is being asked or expected

3)

Regular **encouragement** that reinforces behavior, course corrects mistakes and supports **progress** in pursuit of the ultimate result

---

So the short answer to the big question, “How do you motivate attorneys to market?” lies within these three truths – training, coaching, and encouragement. Further, motivation to market begins with changing the marketing mindset from “marketing is a cheesy, arm-twisting, manipulative, unsavory, self-interested set of activities” to “marketing is about 1) building authentic relationships and 2) solving problems that should be solved even if it means temporarily suspending self-interest.” Or as my six-year old most recently said to me, “Mommy, you help people know how to be nice, make friends and share.”

## Training – The What’s

Let’s begin with training. There are four key things attorneys should know before they embark upon a marketing effort:

1)

**They need to know their target markets.** Target markets can consist of industries, types of business situations, specific buyer types or even specific company targets or contacts. Target markets should be selected based upon strengths, natural skills and genuine interest.

2)

**They need to have an authentic reason to market.** If an attorney doesn’t have a good reason to pick up the phone and call, then the attorney should wait to call until there is an authentic reason. Attorneys should ask themselves – “If I was the person I’m about to call, why would I be interested in hearing from me?” Authentic reasons generally fall into one of three “IN” baskets – Invitations, Introductions, Information.

3)

**They need to have a message.** If an attorney wants to be memorable, they need to be message ready with a Quick Pitch. A Quick Pitch answers the question, “what do you do?” with a response that answers the question, “the problem I solve for whom is \_\_\_\_\_”. People care about what we can do for them or others (not just the job title or practice group).

4)

**They need to choose marketing activities that are rooted in joy.** For some, they would rather impale themselves with a sharp object than go to a networking event. For others, writing or speaking is the equivalent to watching paint dry. Attorneys need to choose marketing activities that are most likely to lead to authentic relationship building and position them as problem-solvers. For some, this is networking and helping people make connections. For others, this is becoming a subject matter expert, writing or speaking on thought leadership or advancing in a leadership position for a professional association.

## Coaching – The How’s

---

Once an attorney knows what to do, there are four key things that provide the “how” for execution:

1)

**Prioritize prep/planning/strategy.** Effective preparation suggests that we honor another’s time by caring enough to have a game plan designed to get to a clear destination. Key elements of preparation are having an objective for why we want to meet, preparing key messages to convey interest and value, know the discovery questions we will ask to deepen understanding and relationships and anticipate outcomes with potential definitive next steps. Preparation helps attorneys control the variables they can in an uncertain market place.

2)

**Utilize the Platinum Rule when asking questions.** The Platinum Rule says do unto others as they would have done unto themselves or in more basic terms serve another’s interest first and your interests will be satisfied over time. The Platinum Rule gives attorneys a posture of service over self-interest. The best way to demonstrate credibility is to ask questions that demonstrate care and interest in another.

3)

**Utilize time-boxed follow-up to stay connected.** Time-boxed follow-up is the opportunity to set definitive next steps in the moment. It’s saying “I’ll call you next Friday to set up lunch” or “I’ll reach back out to you in 6 months if we don’t connect again before then” versus leaving next steps open-ended or saying “we should do this again some time.” Definitive next steps give us the chance to demonstrate that we are our word.

4)

**Know how business really closes.** There is no magic phrase or silver bullet to close business. There are however, 6 qualifiers that can be like silver bullets to close business. Business will generally close if there is 1) a legitimate problem, for which we have 2) a good fit solution and there is 3) a sense of urgency attached to the timeline to make decisions. We must 4) have access to the decision makers and their decision-making criteria, 5) expectations must be in alignment for the level of effort it will take to initiate a relationship or work with us and 6) there must be a budget that fits with our fee structure. When the prospect’s interests align with our 6 qualifiers, business has a way of closing itself.

## **Encouragement**

One of the big reasons attorneys lack motivation (or sustained motivation) to market results is the lack of seeing tangible results (i.e. new business, new clients, etc.) quickly. As important as training and coaching are to equip attorneys, one of the largest success factors for motivation is regular, ongoing encouragement. Encouragement to celebrate when things are going well and encouragement to restore hope when it is difficult to see progress. Encouragement comes from what

gets measured and what gets communicated. While it is appropriate to measure revenue results, measuring progress is vital to sustain momentum. Such progress might be advances in relationships and access to new opportunities. Lastly, regular verbal checkpoints, spot coaching and verbal recognition are some of the most powerful ways to encourage through communication.

Be nice, make friends and share. The motivation comes from within.

As first appeared in the January/February 2010 edition of the “Administrators Advantage” the newsletter of the Chicago Chapter of Association of Legal Administrators.

Copyright © 2025 GrowthPlay

---

National Law Review, Volume , Number 207

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/how-to-motivate-attorneys-to-market>