

How to Market Your Law Practice

By Sheila Danzig
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Start reading to find out.**

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By Sheila Danzig

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Is this everything there is to know about marketing my practice?

No. But it is all you need right now. This book is very simple and focused. It gives you the guts of a marketing program and for most attorneys it will be all you ever need. If the guidelines of this book are all you ever do, you should do quite well. If you don't read it and follow it, I promise that you will end up with ineffective yellow page ads and be convinced that yellow page advertising does not work. The truth is that yellow page advertising does work IF you know how to advertise in the yellow pages and market your practice in a way that has worked for about one hundred years.

For those who want more, there is more. The most comprehensive package on legal marketing was written by a Personal Injury attorney. While it is written for the PI market it has been easily and successfully adapted to all areas of law. There is a page at the end of this book that you can print and fax to the author who has agreed to send you a free tool kit about it. The tool kit is invaluable and I urge you to send for it.

In this book, for illustration purposes, I have focused on one area of law – Immigration Law. I chose immigration law for many reasons, not the least of which was that immigration lawyers, more than any other lawyers I have asked, do not know the first thing about marketing except to run bigger bolder yellow page ads. Immigration law also has nothing special about it in the sense that there is nothing that makes marketing it particularly easy. Immigration law also as much if not more than any other area of law is based on the client trusting you, because the clients for the most part are living in a strange new land. They are a very frightened group of people. One key to getting clients is winning their trust. But the truth of the matter is that you can apply everything that is written here to any area of law. You can apply it to any area of any profession. Please know that immigration law is just used as an example and while you read, think of how you would apply the tools to your work.

But first things first. Let's start.

I Am An Excellent Lawyer. Why Should I Need To Market My Services?

Prior to 1977, lawyers weren't allowed to advertise and they built practices without any advertising. Many lawyers tell me, "If I do a good job and treat clients well, my practice should grow on its own by word of mouth and referrals. After all, the old saying says that if you build a better mouse trap, the world will beat a path to your door. Besides, lawyers couldn't advertise before 1977 and they did fine."

My answer is a bit trite: That was then and this is now. You CAN advertise, and for many, you MUST advertise to grow. What if you build that mouse trap and no one finds out? There are lawyers on every corner. And if you are reading this book, then chances are you would like your practice to grow. So stop thinking like a lawyer and start thinking like a marketer.

Lawyers are among the worst professions at marketing themselves. They all seem to think that if they are a great lawyer they will do just fine. But they won't, and you won't. You need to give clients a reason to choose you over the lawyer in the next town or next door. Yes, referral marketing is a great way to build a practice, but it is slow growing. Learn how to advertise effectively and you can kick start that growth.

If you don't learn how to effectively market your practice and how to write effective ads you will end up wasting money with ineffective ads.

You may not think you are advertising, but you will still have a yellow page ad and it won't work. This will make you easy prey for the yellow page ad salesperson who will tell you that your ad is too small, too bland, too quiet, too something or other - in an attempt to pull money out of your pocket. Chances are you will do what they tell you,

because, after all, they are advertising experts. Or at least that is what they will convince you that they are.

Never forget that they are advertising salespeople only. They don't know anything about advertising. You can see this yourself because virtually all the ads in any one section of the yellow pages looks like the rest (more later about that; specifically about lawyer advertising). If you don't learn how to do effective advertising you will be an advertising victim. You will get a brochure, an email or a phone call from someone who does sound like an expert who will sell you a system, a listing, or some sort of advertising program that will cost you thousands of dollars and will not produce a positive return on investment (ROI). That means you will spend more than you take in from clients.

One day you will meet someone, perhaps at a conference, who will have THE DO-IT-ALL marketing program for you. And you just may fall prey to the sales pitch of

"Your average client pays you about \$5,000.00 and should be referring 2 more clients to you over the course of 5 years. So you can see that a sophisticated comprehensive marketing program that costs you \$3,000.00 a month would only need you to get one client every two or more months to make a profit."

It seems to make sense, doesn't it? It sounds like it should work, doesn't it? So you try it, and when you don't even get two new clients all year, you will be very sorry that you never read this book.

If you ignore the fact that you need to advertise, you will still advertise one day. But you won't know how, and you will just do what everyone else does, thinking they must know what they are doing. I am here to tell you that they don't. Despite the fact that you studied law for at least three years after college, you'll think you *should* know how

to market that law practice without learning *what really works*. So you will end up doing what all the other lawyers who never studied *what really works* do.

And it won't work.

So read this book. It is simple and to the point, and will give you one plan to follow that will work for you as it has worked for many others.

When Do I Start to Market My Practice?

Don't market your practice until you are running your practice properly.

This book is not about practice management, returning phone calls, or taking care of clients. I would like to assume you already do all of that very well. Unfortunately most people, including lawyers, don't know if they are doing a good job running their office. Often they do not want to know because...then what?

How can I figure out if my office is running well?

Start by calling your own office and seeing how long it takes the phone to be answered and how the call is handled. Send out letters to the last 50 clients you have had and ask them (anonymously) to rate your staff, your service and their results. Check and see if you are getting referrals. If things are not going well you need to work on that part of your practice before we start marketing your practice. The biggest mistake any business makes is to market a poorly run firm.

If you get lots of new clients and you can't handle those clients well and efficiently your reputation will tank, and it is very hard to ever get that back. If you don't know if you are running your office well, chances are you are not. Unfortunately I can't help you with that. But there are books and seminars on the subject and you must learn how to run your practice well before you promote your practice. Read a few books and attend a workshop if you can and you will get a clear picture of what needs to be done compared to what you are doing. You put a great deal of work into becoming an attorney. Put a bit more into running and marketing your practice.

What Do I Do After The Client Makes an Appointment to See Me?

This book is going to show you how to increase leads. After that you are on your own. You have to know how to close the sale by being helpful and knowledgeable, by listening well and genuinely wanting to help. If you don't want to help, don't even read the book.

You will need to do whatever it is you do to close a sale. If you are not good at that part of the job, find a book or go to a seminar or talk to some colleagues about it. Because if you can't do that, don't start getting clients coming to your office or all the energy you spend learning how to increase leads will be lost.

The single best way to market your practice is at your desk talking one-to-one with someone in need of your services. Nothing is better than that. The purpose of your advertising and any marketing efforts that you do is to get "leads." That is, to get people to end up on the other side of your desk when they are in need of your services. You can't sell your services with ads. You can't sell your services with books. You can sell your services with face to face or even over the phone meetings where you answer someone's questions and make them feel comfortable with you. Comfortable enough to sign on as your client.

Never ever think you can get clients with advertising. You can only get leads. But leads are a great thing. The rest, again, is up to you. If you want to improve your skills signing up clients just make sure you truly care about your clients and their cases. Make sure you truly want to do your best. Put that foot forward 100% of the time and everyone who sits at your desk will know it. There is no substitute for genuinely caring about a client.

So You Want Me to Think Outside the Box, Right?

People often tell me that I think outside the box. They then ask me how I learned to do that. The truth is I do not think outside the box, I think inside the box. I am just inside a *different* box. I know this sounds strange but it is true.

What Does it Mean to Think Outside the Box?

It tends to mean someone thinks of a different way to do something. They have come up with a new way that no one else thought of. That is not me, and I say that is not any successful marketer. A successful marketer does exactly what other successful marketers have done before them. They don't try new things. I certainly never do. It takes time, energy and money to test a new system and the chances of it succeeding are slim. But when I use a proven marketing strategy and simply adapt it to a new business or concept it takes very little time, energy or money and the chances of it being successful are almost guaranteed.

Does that mean I simply do what everyone else does?

Not at all. Everyone else is outside the box.

I do what everyone else WHO HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL DOES. And most people are not doing that. Let me give you an example. Pull out the yellow pages and look up attorneys - immigration. I have done this in 22 cities and for attorneys the results have always been the same when I check. If you look at the ads the names are different, the size of the ads are different, and the ink colors are different. But over all, the ads are the same. They are all, in essence, shouting "Me me me!"

What do you see?

- The name of the attorney or the firm is very large.
- A picture of one attorney or an entire staff.

- They tell you the number of “combined years experience”. I personally find this very funny because there is a vast difference between two lawyers at a firm that boasts 50 years of combined experience, and twelve lawyers.
- They may tell you what organizations they are members of, as if we know what that means. After all some organizations choose only select lawyers, but most only require payment to join.
- They all promise unsurpassed service.
- They list every type of immigration law there is as their specialty.
- They list the name of each lawyer in the firm.
- They tell me “We care about you.” or “Immigration Matters” Or both.
- Some say they are innovative.
- A few say that they are aggressive.
- A very few tell me that I don’t need to use a lawyer in my own town or state.
- Some say that they are known for such things as their “quality of work” “extraordinary commitment to clients” and finding cost effective solutions to immigration problems.
- Some have had excellent success.
- Some state that they are personal, or prompt, or private. Or all three.
- They may even have a picture of an American Flag and/or a skyline and/or the Statue of Liberty..
- And they all positively offer a valuable free consultation. But we all know that the free consultation is every company’s way of getting you to come in and sign on.

And if you don’t believe me then you have not opened your yellow page book to the heading, “attorney, immigration.’

One might call all of this identical marketing and advertising “Inside the Box” thinking, but the truth is I don’t know what

box it came from. It doesn't work. It is not from a box, though it belongs in the trash.

It is just words printed on paper. Each attorney continuing to do what the last attorney did.

Do you know what is missing?

What is missing is a reason for someone to call any one of them. What is missing is something that tells me why any one of them is different and better than the rest of them. That is what belongs inside the box.

Isn't that what "OUTSIDE THE BOX" thinking means? Finding something different? Isn't that new thinking and new marketing?

No.

These are the original direct mail principles developed over a hundred years ago by the inventor of modern advertising and direct mail. Claude Hopkins. At the turn of the century – and that is today the LAST century - Claude Hopkins wrote "Scientific Advertising" which is the most brilliant book on advertising and marketing ever written. It has been enhanced and adapted to different kinds of markets but the truth is the basics are what still work today. Advertising and marketing geniuses have followed Hopkins' system with great success. Many other great books have been written but the ones that work follow the principles of "Scientific Advertising." They are all INSIDE the box. The rest of you – the people who write legal ads that mean nothing to the reader – are OUTSIDE the box.

There is one thing, and one thing only, that all readers of all advertising are asking. "What's in it for me?" If there is nothing in it for the reader, the page turns, the mail gets tossed, the channel changes.

Let's look at those immigration attorney yellow page ads again and this time let's see how well they answer the question "What's in it for me?" Do any of the immigration attorney ads in the yellow pages answer that question? Except for the "free consultation" they never do answer that question. Since everyone offers a free consultation that offer becomes meaningless.

In other words, in the 22 yellow pages books that I have examined under the section headed "attorneys, immigration" there was not a single ad that gave the reader a reason to call. There was not a single ad, not even a bad one that stood out different from the rest. It was a sea of look-alikes yelling "pick me" and waiving their hands just like little kids when someone comes up with one candy bar to give away.

I have one word for this.

UGH.

How Do I Get Inside the Right Box?

So what is the right advertising path to follow? What works? What is the Inside the Box advertising? The Inside the Box tried and proven advertising started in Claude Hopkins' "Scientific Advertising." Since then nothing has really changed. All great books on marketing follow the principles of Scientific Advertising. They are all inside the box building their businesses. They all know the secret to successful advertising. The secret is to stand out from the crowd with a totally different ad that always answers the question "What's in it for me?" That is, an ad that offers something of value to the reader. Something they want. Something that compels them to call your office instead of any of the other immigration attorneys in town, or in the country.

You know what that is by listening to your own clients and potential clients. What are the most popular questions? Do they want to know the fastest way to a green card? Chances are you can quickly and easily write an excellent "special report" or a book, entitled "How to Qualify for a Green Card", "The Do's and Don'ts of Getting a Green Card" or "The Fastest Way to a Green Card" (EB5, Green Card Lottery, K-1), or "How to Live and Work in the US" etc. "How to bring your Fiancé to the US." "Becoming a US Citizen: 10 Mistakes You Must Never Make." If you spend a little time you will see the possibilities are almost endless. Don't let the word BOOK scare you. What you are reading can be called a "special report" or a book. If you feel you cannot write a book, then call it a special report.

The material you choose to write about should be tied directly to your area of immigration work and be one that you think has the broadest appeal in that area. Once you get to 20 pages you can call it a book, rather than a special report. It doesn't have to be a fancy book. It can be 5.5x8.5 (that is an 8.5x11.5 sheet folded in half) with an index card full color cover. It shouldn't take you more than six weeks

to complete a 20-30 (or more) page book on one subject because this will be a subject you are totally familiar with. Even if you are a recent law school graduate with no practical experience you should know this information very well. You can do a great deal of research on this on the internet and in trade publications or in other books. You are a lawyer so you know you can be inspired by what you read but be careful never to plagiarize.

Imagine this. You are nervously in need of information about some aspect of the immigration process. You open the yellow pages to Lawyers, Immigration and see the sea of ads all saying basic same things. Then, one small ad jumps out at you.

**How to Qualify For A Green Card.
Learn the rules easily.
Call Toll Free Recorded Message 24 hours.
1.866.555.5555. Call Now.**

Would you call? Notice that it says "recorded message" – that means you don't have to talk to anyone. Everyone is afraid of a sales pitch. Calling the recorded message, or visiting the website, where you would ask for their name and address, is painless for the reader.

You can have a voice mailbox set up with most answering services or with your local phone carrier with a toll free number. I suggest that you get a toll free number that YOU OWN, and have it point to the voice mailbox. That way if you become unhappy with the service or if you want to expand and offer numerous free publications and need a more sophisticated system, you can take the toll free number with you. If you get a voice mailbox with a toll free number, then when you leave, the toll free number stays with them and anyone who sees one of your older ads will not be able to reach you. It is probably cheaper to get your own toll free number as well. You should also have a voice

mail message that allows the caller to “press Zero” to connect to my office.

The caller can speak to someone at your office, but they only need to leave their name and address and you send them the book. The book answers all their questions. When you send the book, include any other materials about you or your practice. This would include an office brochure, any newsletters and any articles that have appeared about you.

A word about sending copies of articles. They usually end up with single columns continued on another page. They don't copy well that way so take them to your local print shop (like Kinko's) and have the artist there re-design the article so that it is evened out. Also have the artist put the masthead of the newspaper on the top of the page. Now when you make copies they will be easy to read and very impressive.

At the end of the book write a friendly business letter. It offers to answer any other questions that they have in person or on the phone at no charge. This is that “free consultation” that you, and every other lawyer wanted to give them. Only now it means something. Now, after they have your book, it is a sincere offer to answer their questions.

Which lawyer would you chose? The one that gave you the information you were looking for and offered to answer your questions, or the one with the American Flag in the yellow page ad? The answer should be getting obvious now.

What Do I Say On the Recorded Message?

The purpose of the recorded message is to gather the names and addresses of the people who want this information. All you need to say is something like this:

Hello. I am attorney John J. Jones. Thank you for calling for the Free Book, "How To Live and Work in America." At the tone, please leave your name and address and we will send you the book within two business days. If you would like to connect to my office press ZERO."

Enter their names and addresses in a simple database and send the book out.

As time passes you may offer more than this one free book on one subject. At that time you can have extension numbers in your ads so if the person hits 101, they get a message about how to get a green card, 202, how to bring their family over, etc. The possibilities are endless, but just focus on starting with one offer right now.

How Do I Write a Book? That is a Tall Order! After All, I Do Have a Practice to Run.

First, choose a subject that you know potential clients are interested in. Chances are if you have been in practice for any length of time you know this subject very well. Learn a bit more by going to the library, local book store and doing web searches. All you really need to do is write as if you are speaking at career day at a middle school and you are explaining the subject. Make sure it is simple and easy for anyone to follow, and most of all, keep it interesting. Don't get too technical. Don't write as if you are trying to impress people. Just write as if you are trying to teach a middle school student the information. Write what you would say to them. A good practice is to pretend you are at career day and tape what you would say. Then transpose it.

It does not need to be too long and it does not need to be the least bit fancy but it does need to be easy to read, easy to understand and interesting. Keep it in your mind, give up a few social events and sit down and just do it. It will be finished very quickly. Have people you trust proof read it. Not only for typos and such but for content. People you trust means people who will tell you that they just did not understand the second page. If you have teenage children or teenage nieces or nephews they are a good choice. Not only will they be happy to critique you but they will now have a better understanding of what it is you do. I suggest teenagers because once they are in their twenties they may become too polite to tell you what they think is wrong. They may also have some information on the subject by then. You want whatever you write to be interesting and to also be understood by someone who does not know a single thing about the subject. It may take a few rewrites but it will be worth it. For one thing it will make you much more articulate and clear when you speak to your clients on the subject. For another, you will end up with a valuable information package that opens your marketing door.

Why Don't Lawyers Know How to Market Themselves?

The truth is almost no one knows how to market themselves even though the information is out there. So everyone just does what everyone else is doing, even though it does not work. You look at the yellow page ads and, as sad as they are, you copy them - only you may add some red in your attempt to shout "pick me" a bit louder. Car dealerships do the same thing. Look at the Sunday paper and tell me if you see any difference from one ad to the next?

You need to be able to stand out from the crowd. You don't have to make your ad bigger or more expensive to stand out, just more interesting. You simply need to give away the information that your client wants. You need to answer the question that they ask all day long, whatever that question is. You can't be afraid to be controversial. It won't take long for other lawyers to see and respond to your ad. They will ask you about it. If that makes you too uncomfortable to proceed with this, stop reading.

Do this and you will be doing a service to the community. You will also be building your practice.

Why Are We Only Looking at Yellow Page Ads?

As I stated earlier, this book is an introduction to marketing your practice so we need to limit the media we will examine. However, even more important than the yellow pages is the original medium where the client comes looking for you. If you run an ad in a newspaper (and I am not saying that newspaper ads won't work) the vast majority of the people seeing the ad will have no use for your services and even those that may one day have use for your services won't have use for them now. However, everyone who goes to "Attorneys, Immigration" is looking for something to do with immigration. It is the best way to locate the person who is looking for you. Unfortunately there is no list of people who want to get green cards, bring their family over, etc.

Yellow pages are also where lawyers have traditionally come to spend big dollars advertising. The back cover, the inside back or front cover, and a middle of the book tab is often an ad for an attorney. Every attorney has an ad, or at least a listing in the yellow pages. Very few professions spend anywhere nearly as much as attorneys do on yellow page ads. And yet the attorney yellow page ads never give any useful information whatsoever. It is a profession where the potential client (regardless of the area of law being practiced) is generally anxious and in need of information and all you give them is a "FREE CONSULTATION", a picture of an American Flag, and a list of organizations that you also belong to.

This is the medium where you can stand out by giving them some useful information to read in the privacy of their own home, on their own time, just as we stood out by giving you this book.

By now this "system" should all start to make sense to you. The object is for the consumer to initiate contact with you in a non-threatening environment that rewards the consumer

with valuable information, and to give answers to questions that are on his mind at that moment with him able to read that material in the privacy of his own home or office at no cost and with no obligation. They know that they won't be pressured by an aggressive attorney and they have an opportunity to slow down and gather information so they can do the best job possible when they do choose an attorney. And when that time comes you will be the wise man at the top of the heap of the screaming advertisements. You will create clients who feel lucky to be able to hire you.

Have you ever heard of Mehmet C. Oz, MD? I don't know much about Dr. Oz except that he wrote some great books on health and has been on the Oprah show. What I do know is what his patients say about him. Things like "I couldn't believe I could actually get to see him." "It meant waiting longer for an appointment but he is worth waiting for." People feel lucky to see him rather than him having to sell himself. Why? Because he did an excellent job as a physician and then wrote books giving people the information about their health that they need. On a smaller scale, that is what I want for you. You don't need to have a book published by a major publishing house and be on Oprah to get there in your particular field. You just need to provide valuable information to people in need of it.

Don't I Need An Ad Agency to Design My Ads?

Absolutely not. In fact you can find ad agency designed ads in most yellow pages ads. You can usually recognize them by the slickness of their graphics. They may have a collage of people instead of a skyline or the Statue of Liberty in the ad.

Your ad will not have any graphics. It will just have text, with a bold border around it and a headline. It will try to look like more like an article than an ad. Why? Because people trust articles but they don't trust ads. Just like you.

Imagine this. It is Friday after work, and you are in the mood for pizza for dinner. You see an ad for PIZZA PIZZA and you show it to your buddy. It says the pizza is delicious, 10% larger than the other pizza pies and 10% cheaper than any pizza pies in town. But your buddy says he saw a review of MAGIC PIZZA and the review said their pizzas are delicious and larger than the average pizza pie. Where would you go? Magic Pizza wins every time because people trust articles (reviews) over ads, even though Pizza Pizza was cheaper. We always believe articles over ads. Every time. Put people in an "article" mood.

Ad agencies get awards for their design. One day I would love to see them get awards based on the response to the ad. Suddenly ads will all change, and even the agencies will start to learn how to market their practice.

Legal Disclaimer

Here is my disclaimer. Notice that the font on this page is bigger than the rest of the book. Needless to say there are no guarantees that any of this will make you rich or that it will work at all. It is given to you freely, as information only. I am not responsible for anything you chose to do with this information.

There are rules about lawyers' advertising etc. I am not a lawyer and I do not pretend to understand any of the rules. The rules seem to apply to advertisements for services and the ads that I will teach you about do not advertise services as far as I can tell. I suggest you check the rules yourself and feel free to ask the Bar Association for their opinion.

BONUS: The Biggest Mistakes Lawyers Make With Their Marketing

Whatever you do – DON'T do these:

1. Copy What The Big Firms Do.

There are firms with so much money that they can spend huge amounts of money on advertising. Don't think for one moment this means they are getting a profitable return on their investment.

2. Have Your Business Meetings Over Lunch.

Restaurants are distracting and not the best place to meet with a client. Your office is the best place to meet with a potential client. It is professional and allows you to pull up files or other information instead of having to tell them that you will get back to them. Restaurants also lack privacy. You don't want to discuss matters that can be overheard.

3. Forget That Your First Job is to do a Great Job Taking Care of Your Clients.

I don't care how big a stream of new clients you have, if you don't do a great job it will dry up. Your most important job is to do a great job.

4. Ignore Everything In This Book.

You have all that you need to start. Just start.

I See the Value in Marketing My Practice and I Want MORE ...

As I told you at the beginning this is not all there is. There is a lot more for you to learn and do, and in my opinion the single best legal marketer in the country is Ben Glass. Ben studied the principles in this book under some of the best marketers in the country and adapted it to his law practice. He is a personal injury attorney and built his practice using these methods. He then created an extraordinary program so any lawyer in any specialty can follow his success.

He has agreed to send all of my readers a free tool kit (he calls it a report, but it is much more than that) just for faxing or mailing the next page to him. So print the page and send it to him. Like this book, it is free, with no obligation.

Hey Ben, Sheila Danzig Says That You Will Mail Me a Free 60 Page report and Audio CD on Lawyer Marketing

Name _____

Firm Name _____

Address _____

Suite No. _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

Telephone No. _____

FAX TO: Ben Glass (toll free) 877-576-6752

Or mail to

Ben Glass

3915 Old Lee Highway, Suite 22-B

Fairfax, VA 22030

One final message

I hope you have enjoyed this book and understand the process of marketing your practice effectively. Rather than trying to get people to buy your services from your ads (which is impossible) you now know to offer valuable information with the goal of turning them into leads who will want to use you when they need an attorney. Please do not take lightly the importance of treating each client as if he is the most important client you have because each client has put his trust, his hopes and his dreams in your hands. This book is in some small part my way of helping to make those clients realize their dreams..

If you have any questions or comments about anything you have read, feel free to email me at sheila@danzig.com