

# ASSOCIATES AS RAINMAKERS

BY STEVEN A. MEYEROWITZ

This year, for the first time, associates at the Providence, R.I., law firm of Edwards & Angell are preparing marketing plans that outline their client development projects for the year ahead.

At Pittsburgh's Reed, Smith, Shaw & McClay, associates are members of the firm's practice development teams, which plan and organize the firm's marketing activities.

Associates are becoming more involved in marketing for several reasons. For one thing, firms need all the help they can get and associates are a resource they cannot afford to ignore, says Phyllis Weiss Haserot, the president of New York-based Practice Development Counsel.

Associates who learn how to market can better handle the transition to partnership, where bringing in new clients is part of the job. In fact, many firms find that associates who participate in a firm's client development program are more likely to stay with the firm.

"They have the feeling that a part of it is theirs, that they can do something creative and add to the business," Haserot says.

Cost is a major drawback to involving associates in marketing activities. The more time an associate spends on client development, the less time is available for billable hours.

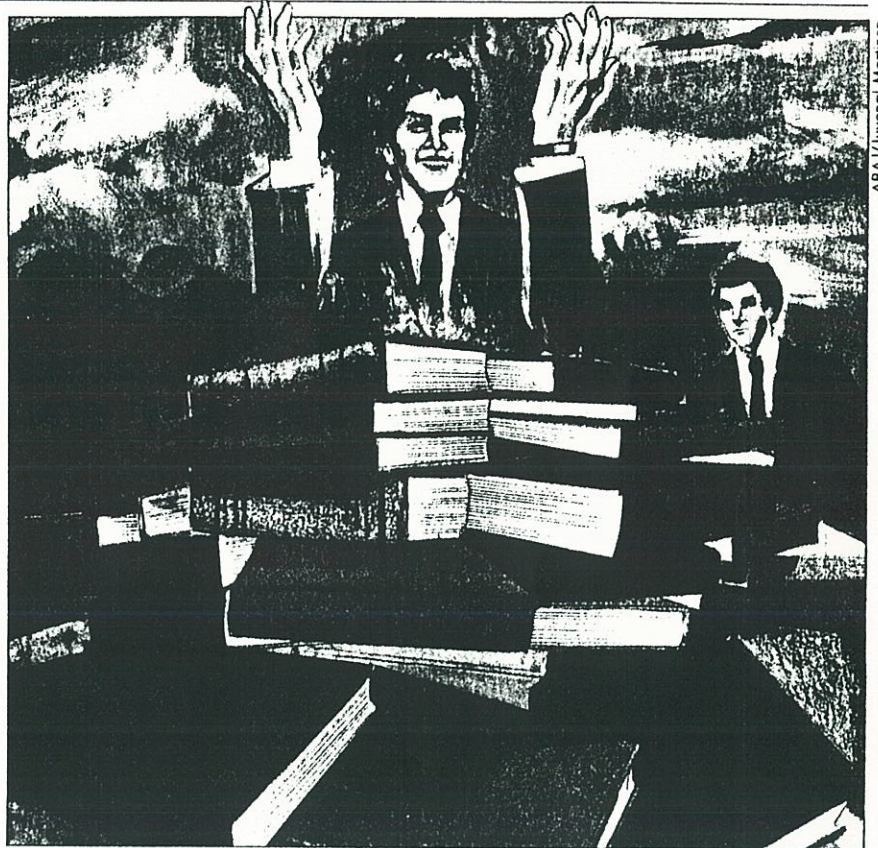
## THE BOTTOM LINE

Financial arguments can be overcome. Firms that encourage associates to bring in business are making an investment in the associates and the firm as well. That should make it easier to credit some of the time that associates spend on marketing toward their billable hours requirement, as Edwards & Angell does.

Firms that want their associates to become involved with marketing can make it a prerequisite for partnership. Even associates who don't plan to stay around for the partnership vote should recognize that marketing is an important professional skill.

Short-term projects offer a way to

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ease associates into client development activities. "Associates should be encouraged to get involved in organizations outside of law associations where there are sources of new business or referrals," Haserot says.

They can help run seminars for clients, give in-house presentations for the media, and write new business proposals, client newsletters and articles for trade or scholarly publications.

And then there's the matter of teaching raw associates how to market effectively. Many partners may object to this responsibility because they think it's a drain on their time.

The training program need not be all that time-consuming, says Jay M. Jaffe, the president of Jaffe Associates, Inc. in Washington, D.C.

"All too often, partners think of training as a very formal process—they ask 'what course should we bring in?' for example. But, just by telling war stories to associates, you can show them how the firm has gotten

business in the past."

Marketing can be made a part of regular departmental meetings, where partners can encourage associates to generate marketing ideas. Let them see drafts of the firm brochure and promotional literature. Their comments may improve these materials and they'll be better able to talk about the firm to potential clients.

Helping with a firm's marketing does not mean that associates should take over the firm's strategic planning. Any firm that leaves planning or practice development primarily in the hands of associates is making a big mistake. But, as Reed Smith practice development partner Daniel I. Booker says, "any firm that ignores its associates is crazy." ■

Rules governing certain marketing practices vary from state to state. For specific guidance, consult your state bar association.