
Lawyers Court New Business

*Marketing is still restrained,
self-conscious, and controversial
in legal circles. It's also
irreversibly part of the profession.*

by Steven A. Meyerowitz

When William H. Roth left a major national law firm earlier this year to open Kelly, Roth & Hazen, a small general practice firm in New York, he began to do something he hadn't done before: market his services.

Because he works with a limited budget, Mr. Roth hasn't yet prepared a glossy, four-color brochure describing his firm. But he's always on the lookout for articles from American newspapers to clip and send to his foreign corporate clients. When he sees an interesting court decision, he photocopies it and explains its significance in a brief cover letter to the businesses he represents.

"I think it's important to communicate with clients," Mr. Roth says. "It makes them realize that I'm conscientious and that, even during my hours of relaxation, I'm thinking about them."

Certainly lawyers have always let clients know about new legal developments. But Mr. Roth's actions and similar steps by lawyers across the country are a radical departure from their traditional conduct.

"They didn't do it as frequently as they do it today, and not with the same awareness of its relation to marketing and client retention," says Donna Greenfield, a vice president of Greenfield/Belser Ltd., a Washington, D.C.-based marketing design firm.

In fact, lawyers are more than just "aware" of marketing. When the national publication of the American Bar Association, the *ABA Journal*, began a monthly marketing column last November, its editor hailed marketing as "the hottest topic among lawyers today."

Lawyers are pouring both dollars and energy into marketing. The largest national law firms, which gross between \$100 million and \$200 million in billings a year, may spend from 1% to 4% of that total on marketing activities, Ms. Greenfield says. One out of every four lawyers advertises on television, radio, billboards or newspapers, according to a recent survey by the American Bar Association. And lawyers spent about \$47 million on televised ads last year alone, according to the Television Bureau of Advertising, a trade association.

NOT USED TO HAWKING'

A 1977 Supreme Court decision, *Bates v. Arizona*, opened the floodgates of promotion. Ten years after that decision, lawyers flock to marketing—but many of them

Continued on page 56

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