

MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

A marketing director takes charge

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BY STEVEN A. MEYEROWITZ

When the Boston law firm of Palmer & Dodge hired Laura D. Woolpert as its director of marketing and communications in December 1985, its marketing efforts had been "undirected and unfocused," admits real estate specialist James B. White, a member of the 135-lawyer firm's marketing committee and its immediate past chairman.

Hiring Woolpert gave the firm an in-house resource, someone to back up and coordinate marketing efforts. Two years later, the firm has gained new clients in each of its 10 departments, with notable growth in its international, high tech and real estate practice groups. In the process, marketing has become an inextricable part of the firm's culture and Woolpert has become expert in the art of getting things done without making waves.

"The first marketing goals we formulated were modest and realistic," says Woolpert, whose background includes 10 years' experience in advertising and corporate public relations. "We didn't aim to raise business by a certain percentage, but rather to attract certain types of clients."

One of the first things she did after coming to the firm was to meet with each of its 53 partners. She also prepared a detailed budget and marketing plan for 1986.

The marketing plan was designed to "establish a basic marketing framework," says Woolpert. This meant generating written materials—resumes for individuals, press releases, recruiting materials, firm-wide brochures and brochures for specific departments, newsletters and in-house communications.

As time went on, strategies were developed for particular departments. The firm had a reputation, ac-



James White and Laura Woolpert with some Palmer & Dodge brochures.

ording to Woolpert, as "an outstanding bond firm," but other departments were not as well-known. So, two projects included boosting the visibility of the real estate department and better cross-selling of the tax department.

Initially, she faced a fair amount of resistance to her position. "When I came in, 15 percent of the firm were strong believers in marketing and were supportive," she says. The rest were opposed or indifferent.

She met some resistance head-on when she and White decided to have the firm's recruiting brochure revised. They wanted to be involved in the project because, she says, "hiring is the supreme marketing effort."

The brochure the firm had been using was delivering "the wrong message of a 100-year-old, stodgy firm, not one with a dynamic high-tech practice," says Woolpert. The idea was to rewrite and redesign the brochure so that it was in sync with the firm's desired image. But Woolpert's efforts were blocked by a split

between the hiring and the marketing committees on the tone and appearance of the brochure.

The stalemate was broken only after the managing partner intervened and sided with Woolpert and White. Differences also were worked out in meetings between the two committees, in which, says Woolpert, "we were able to negotiate a common ground."

The four-color, 16-page brochure took six months to produce, which Woolpert thinks is quite fast. "It normally takes a year to produce a major promotional piece of that caliber."

Woolpert also managed to make a convert out of one skeptic after he spoke at a seminar the firm co-sponsored on the Tax Reform Act. The partner attended a reception that followed the seminar. Seeing the clients' response firsthand was what made him a believer, says Woolpert.

Overcoming initial resistance was easy compared to navigating firm politics, says Woolpert. These problems crop up in several ways.

Steven A. Meyerowitz, a lawyer, is a free-lance writer living in New York. Edward J. Burke, the Journal's regular Marketing writer, will be back next month.