

'STRENGTH TRAINING' FOR BUSINESS

Focusing on What You Do Best Is One Key to Rainmaking Success

BY STEVE SEIDENBERG

Forget advertising. To truly grow your law practice, you need to know your strengths, know your target market and know how to reach that market.

This is the advice offered by Stephen Fairley, a Chicago-based business coach and the author of *Practice Made Perfect*, a how-to marketing guide for lawyers.

Lawyers seem to be listening. For an April conference in Illinois, organizers expected 50 to 80 attendees for his lecture, but 293 showed up. In New Jersey later that month, the state bar association expected to attract between 80 and 100 people, but attendance soon surpassed 200, with latecomers forced to stand. Results have been similar in New York, San Diego—every place that Fairley has given his talk.

So just how does Fairley suggest a lawyer go after referrals? The first step is to play to your strengths: Figure out what type of work you love to do, what type of people you enjoy working with, and what your unique strengths are as an attorney. Then focus on doing this type of work, he says. If you concentrate on an area where your knowledge and skills are unique, it will be easier to sell yourself to potential clients, plus you'll be able to command a premium price for your services. And since you'll be doing more of your favorite type of work, you'll get more enjoyment out of your workdays.

The advice worked for New York City small-firm lawyer Robert Newman, who took Fairley's rainmaking advice and created a downpour.

Working one-on-one with Fairley, Newman decided that the best way to bring in more business was to expand his international information technology practice. "In many ways, there is no competition for the services we are providing," he says. "No one else has 12 years of experience in designing IT systems."

But determining your unique strength is just part of the rainmaking process. You also need to figure out the identity of your target market—the people who can benefit most from what you have to offer, who can give you repeat business, and who can make hiring decisions about attorneys, Fairley says.

Elisabeth Kovac is taking this target-market approach as she strives to expand her business. She works in a small New York City firm representing Austrian companies doing business in New York.

After attending Fairley's seminar and subsequently speaking with him, Kovac has contacted the Austrian Bar Association and obtained a list of the country's small and medium-size law firms. She plans to send out monthly newsletters to these firms, creating relationships with them and demonstrating the many ways she can help them.

"I am more confident that I am doing the right things to reach my goal," she says, "which is making myself more noticeable and getting more clients."

Fairley also helped Kenneth Tiangco hone in on his target market. His two-person law firm, based in Scarsdale, N.Y., does most of its work representing lenders in real estate transactions. But after attending Fairley's seminar, Tiangco started to re-evaluate his rainmaking efforts, and he realized he had been off the mark.

He had been spending time and effort to impress his clients' loan officers to garner more business, but he discovered those loan officers weren't actually the decision-makers. Instead, he shifted his efforts to target "closers"—those employees who handle the final parts of deals, including closings.

Tiangco, who also consulted one-on-one with Fairley, then staged a mini-marketing blitz directed at 10 closers. His results were impressive: Six of them signed on as clients. Following Fairley's advice, Tiangco says, "has been paying big dividends."

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About Stephen Fairley

Stephen Fairley is the international best-selling author of 9 books including *Practice Made Perfect for Lawyers* (2005). He is president of Today's Leadership Coaching and specializes in coaching attorneys to create practices that are financially successful and personally rewarding.

In 2004, Stephen was named "America's Top Marketing Coach" by CoachVille, the world's largest professional coaching organization and given their top achievement award. He is scheduled to speak at more than 20 state and local bar associations in 2005 alone. For more information, please call (800) 447-3852 or visit: www.YourPracticeMadePerfect.com