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— CHANGE . . . RESULTS . . . SUCCESS —

A DAILY COMMITMENT TO MARKETING

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Back in late 2017, I published two articles in the PA Bar News: “Game Rules Have Changed,” followed by “Game Rules Have Changed: How Should You Respond?” These two articles sparked quite a response from attorneys, as well as executive directors of county bar associations seeking help for their members.

In the first article I summed up the big rule change in this manner:

For most attorneys it’s counterintuitive to continue to build connections, referral sources, and actively market to past, present and prospective clients when you have a steady flow of work in your pipeline. And it’s counterintuitive precisely because the rules have taught us that this is time to reap the rewards of the long pedal uphill; time to enjoy the fruits of your labor and coast [to retirement].

Unfortunately, due to the high level of competition in the marketplace, coupled with an inability to institutionalize most business, most lawyers nowadays are not able to establish a sufficiently strong brand within a niche. . . .

The point is that if you cease pedaling, you’re going to coast to a stop at the bottom of a hill. Except then you’ll be older and have less energy. And retirement will likely be quite a distance further than you expected. In reality it means you will need to pedal even harder to climb once again.

In the second article I got down to providing guidance on what to include in an action plan. I detailed seven action points. [Note: if you would like a copy of these two articles, send an email request to lawpractice@pabar.org. With “Game

Rules” in the subject line, and your full name and member ID number and county in the email.] In this article, I want to reintroduce you to the first action point: **Never take your foot off the pedal!**

First, why now? As we approach the post-pandemic normal, things will change yet again.

Many attorneys retired earlier than anticipated when their practices languished during lockdown. Others have suffered through it but have a lot of rebuilding to do. Obviously, they will benefit from this column.

Many of you have actually been incredibly busy during the pandemic. There were a lot of opportunities to service clients of all types, created by pandemic-related issues. Unfortunately, these will slowly level off.

And many of you experienced backlogs as court systems and administrative agencies required to move your cases forward were closed. That backlog is creating a lot of present-day work, but your pipeline behind it may have barely a trickle.

Most of you don't have the energy, time, or resources to devote to building a practice, like when you started out. And yes, when we're busy we have the tendency to stop most marketing activities and use that time to get client work done. However, the best practice is to never take your foot off the marketing pedal at all.

When your practice is sufficiently off the ground, and you are consistently feeding off a relatively full plate of work, you should not stop activities designed to grow your practice. You should scale them back to those which will sustain your momentum — the flow of work into your pipeline — until long after your anticipated retirement.

There should be no stops in this activity. You need to create a list of the types of activities you will engage in. And make a commitment to block time — between 15 to 30 minutes — on your calendar each day to do something on the list. Each week you can plot out your commitment for each day the following week. Put it on the calendar. Make it very specific.

Here are examples of appropriate activities:

- Write and publish a post on your blog, and/or other social media like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. Time commitment 30 minutes.
Topic idea.

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- Write a couple meaningful comments on posts of others you're connected to on social media. Time commitment 15 minutes. Topic based on what others have written.
- Contact a specific person and arrange a lunch together either in person or virtually. Schedule two different people for different days. Get the lunches on your calendar. Time commitment 15 - 20 minutes. Specific names.
- If you have a virtual meeting with someone who is or could be a good referral source or future client, consider making it more memorable by asking the name of their favorite local delivery place, and treating them to lunch. That extra gesture will go a long way. Put the note on your calendar for a couple of days ahead of the scheduled lunch to make the arrangements.
- Create a list of conversational topics for virtual or personal lunches. Open-ended questions work best. "What's your new normal?" "What was the biggest challenge you had to overcome?" "Were there any particularly uplifting events during the lockdown?" "How has your family come through this?" "What problems are you anticipating that are keeping you up at night?" Time commitment 15 minutes x a few days.
- Do a market analysis of your strength on Google by searching for yourself by not just name and firm name, but by key words a potential client might enter to search. Make notes of how your results are for each search. Time commitment 15 minutes x some number of days.
- Prepare for your market analysis by creating a comprehensive list of the key words you want to search for. Time commitment 15 minutes x several days.
- Read an article on some aspect of marketing and write down an idea that you want to implement. Add that to your list of activities, and get it scheduled to start planning.

These are a lot of examples. None are very time-consuming when completed in small increments of time. The trick is to do something *every single day*. Whether it's a call, an email, writing a couple more bullet points on your marketing plan document, posting something in LinkedIn, or a Google search, it's about *doing*.

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You've heard me say this countless times before . . . real progress is made by taking continuous baby steps in the right direction. Build a new habit that you will never regret; do a small piece of marketing every single day.

Ellen Freedman, CLM is the Law Practice Management Coordinator of the Pennsylvania Bar Association. In that capacity, she assists PBA members with issues and problems that arise on the business side of their practice. Ellen is also president of Freedman Consulting.

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