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# Pennsylvania



# Family Lawyer

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## Generating Prospect Names for the Family Law Practice

*By Les Altenberg*

Marketing the family law practice is inherently difficult. Unlike for other areas of the law, there are few, if any resources available that contain the names of ready made prospects. The individual contemplating a divorce or actually going through the process may seek counseling or join an on-line dating service, but for the most part, their consumption patterns and activities may be no different than that of the mainstream population.

Second, an individual can be in any of a number of stages of the divorce process – from merely considering such an action, to actually hiring an attorney and filing, to seeking assistance in having a settlement altered.

Further, even if such resources were available, the family law practitioner must always be wary of communicating to target names in a manner that could potentially place the recipient of that message in harm's way. After all, an already angry husband or wife may not understand why their spouse is receiving a communication from an attorney and may act on that "less-than-appreciative" impulse. This is particularly true for those relationships in which domestic violence plays a role in the disintegration of the marriage in the first place.

Yet despite these obstacles, family law practitioners must nonetheless continue to develop their business and database marketing remains one very viable means for doing so.

Critical to database marketing is actually building the list itself. There are a number of ways to do this, none of which risks provoking the actions mentioned previously. All do however; require an action on the part of the targeted individual.

The first of these involves development of an on-line or off-line piece of communication, usually in the form of a newsletter or client "alert," which offers helpful advice, tips etc. on matters of divorce. It should not be a selling piece highlighting the firm's services, accomplishments, etc. Prominently displaying the availability of such useful information on the firm website allows the site visitor to decide whether or not to opt in. In addition, if the newsletter is of the on-line variety, a "pass along to a friend" link can be created, thereby further extending name-generating

potential as well.

A similar approach to take is developing an informational brochure on a particular topic (e.g., Appealing a Previously Agreed Upon Child Support Settlement) and then disseminating press releases to the local media highlighting its availability to the general public. Local publications will often print such information as a public service. Of course, the release should communicate the telephone number at which the brochure may be requested. And while the brochure should not contain "selling material" per se, it should nonetheless highlight the name of the firm. The brochure serves several purposes, not the least of which is its ability to generate names of individuals who are willing to accept communications. In addition to its list development properties, the brochure also serves as a "reminder" and "pass along" tool.

Third, it should be a fairly standard procedure that each new prospect that comes to the firm (be it in person, through the web site, email or telephone) be asked whether they wish to be added to the firm's mailing list.

Finally, creating special events, usually in the form of seminars, is yet another way in which lists. As with the aforementioned, such formats allow the individuals to determine for themselves whether they wish to receive further communications from the firm.

When it comes to standing out in a highly competitive industry – particularly one that is both high ticket and complex, it is the smart law firm that provides valuable information to its prospects and clients. In whatever form it takes, that information is useful to the practice as a means to generate a database as well as maintain top-of-mind awareness.

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