

THE LAW FIRM GROWTH FORMULA

How smart solicitors attract more of the right clients
at the right price to grow their law firm quickly

NICK JERVIS

SOLICITOR (NON-PRACTISING)



RETHINK PRESS

First published in Great Britain 2017 by Rethink Press (www.rethinkpress.com)

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*For
Emma, Megan and Samuel: my world.*

Praise

‘As an owner or manager of your firm you want to achieve growth and then be able to “rinse and repeat”. This book tells you how in a practical and methodical way and gives you the tools to own this process for yourself, whether you do it all for yourself or manage others to do some or all of it for you. It also gives you the tools to measure and manage your progress. A refreshing and useful business read and having tested the method I know it works.”

MARIE HUNTLEY
Huntley Legal Solicitors

“A well-structured and easy to follow guide to growing your law firm. Nick avoids ‘marketing speak’ and instead uses straightforward and accessible language, making his ideas easy to follow and implement. Helpful, informative and a must read for any lawyer involved in business development.”

JONATHAN TYLER
Partner, Seth Lovis & Co. Solicitors

“High Street law firms continue to be under increasing pressure. That is not going to change. Advice from Nick Jervis over the last eight years has been a critical factor in the growth of my successful and profitable practice, and his book is packed with practical marketing advice. If you want your law firm to prosper and thrive, you need to read this book.”

TIM BISHOP
Senior Partner, Bonallack and Bishop

“It is clear that Nick really understands the legal services market and what it takes to make the telephone ring for solicitors. I have no doubt that any solicitor who wants to grow their law firm reads this and then takes action will see very impressive results. It is working for me!”

JONATHAN GOODWIN
Solicitor Advocate

“Nick Jervis has written a very comprehensive marketing guide which will surely be of immense value to anyone wishing to grow their practice. Nick has clearly drawn upon all his years of marketing experience to produce this practical and insightful guide, which is packed full of information including a selection of very handy marketing checklists designed to give structure, momentum and success.

Buy it!”

CHRIS CARTER

Carter & Carter Solicitors

“At last, a marketing book for lawyers written in plain English. Nick certainly gets to the point without resorting to marketing speak. You can look forward to learning about lots of simple, effective ideas to promote and grow your law firm. Packed with practical examples, this book provides a step by step guide to increase your turnover, profit and to enhance the reputation of your practice.”

JACQUELINE EMMERSON

Director, Emmersons Solicitors

“What Nick Jervis has written here is a straightforward guide that will allow any law firm to put in place marketing that attracts new clients predictably and reliably. Everything in this book is rooted in experience not theory, and Nick does a great job of explaining everything clearly. Armed with this book alone, someone who’s never marketed anything before would quickly be able to start generating good quality new leads and clients for their law firm.”

MARK CREASER

Managing Partner, Ideal Result

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Foreword

There are precious few books that focus on how to grow a law firm. Most sit in one of two camps: those that offer a snake-oil salesman's magic silver bullet ('double your profits in one month or your money back...') and those that are not rooted in the reality of what it is like to try and grow a law firm. I am delighted to say that *The Law Firm Growth Formula* is neither of these.

Nick Jervis has taken a practical and proven formula and explained how it can be applied to your law firm. He explains the steps and the processes and even explains how and why you should be using his tools.

This book is not about your technical ability to deliver your service; that is not in dispute. It is about your ability to run a business. It about getting you to work *On* your business and not just *In* the business. Easy to say and difficult to do.

Let's be clear, marketing is an entire waste of time if it doesn't result in a sale, now or in the future. Too much time is spent looking at vanity measures (hits, likes, follows) and not enough time is spent looking at how to increase sales to the clients you want to be working with. I am delighted to say that Nick is far more interested in what actually works to help you grow your practice.

In a light, yet engaging style, Nick manages to get to the essence of some core questions that can keep you awake at night:

- Why should people bother to buy from you when they can buy from the competition?
- What makes you different from the rest?
- How can you get more and better clients?
- How can you get more enquiries and how can you convert more of the ones you want?
- Which marketing tools should you use and how do you use them?

Answering these questions is especially difficult for a professional service firm. You are not selling a product that can be seen and touched; you are selling a service which feels near impossible to differentiate, one from another. I would go as far as to say that you are selling hot air: an idea, a belief that you are the best solution for a client. Being able to articulate what you do and why you should be selected is as important, if not more important than being able to do the work itself.

Nick's approach will underpin your ability to grow a more successful law firm. It will help you to run the firm you are capable of running. Along the way he will also challenge the role of your law firm and how you need to flex and adjust so that you don't get left behind in a world of incredibly high-paced change.

Every law firm should put up a copy of Nick's Client Conversion Flowchart in their office and issue everyone with a copy of his New Client Flowcast Marketing Model. If only more practices bought into such an approach then the industry would have a far better reputation for delivering responsive customer service and value for money!

Meanwhile, only those that know about Nick's charts will gain the benefits. And that is only as long as you actually take what he recommends and take the relevant action.

Every industry is vulnerable to being 'uberised'. Client needs and demands are rapidly changing as are their options for solutions.

In fact, there will inevitably be even more seismic changes in the industry. Not all firms will survive. Nick's book will help you to run a firm fit for the increasingly demanding world we now live and compete in.

I am more and more convinced that effective marketing is all about the execution of the plan. This book will show you what to do and how to do it!

Hope is not a strategy!

Robert Craven
*Author, *Grow Your Service Firm**

Introduction

Who is this book for?

This book, and the formula contained within it, will work for anyone involved in the marketing of legal services. The marketing strategies and tactics I talk about have been used for law firms of all sizes, from sole practitioners to mid-tier and top tier law firms.

However, some of the specific elements of the book are aimed very much at the law firm owner. A law firm owner might work alone, or might employ a team of 20 to 100 staff in one or more offices, but the owner is the sole decision maker. Why do I specifically focus on this law firm owner? Well, you probably need to know a little bit about me to understand this better, so let me tell you a little about my background – and also about my impatience. That part is quite critical.

My Story

I entered the legal profession later in life than most. My impatience caused me to abandon my 'A' levels after only one year. I was frustrated at hearing more and more theory and not doing anything with it. I wanted to get out into the world and do something. I'd had jobs from about the age of 12 and I knew that I was a good worker, because I was constantly being told that this was the case

wherever I worked, from the lovely lady at the end of my paper round who rewarded me with a milky coffee and occasionally a cake if I delivered the papers to her hotel before 7 AM, to the hotel owner in Devon where I worked part-time but ended up being the bar and restaurant manager because I worked so hard and well, via many other jobs in between. I knew I could turn my hand to most things and I seemed to do them well, so I was keen to do something full time and earn a living.

So, I walked away from my 'A' levels, much to the disappointment of my parents, and went to work in a transport company, renting out articulated trucks and trailers. I worked my way up to the position of Southern Area Relief Manager, but really couldn't see myself doing that for the rest of my life, so I left to travel and see some of the world.

After spending some time in Greece sailing yachts, I returned to the UK in my early 20s and decided it was about time I chose a career. However, as I was impatient there was no way that that career was going to involve returning to education in any way, shape or form, and studying full time. I needed to be working at the same time as learning a profession. I settled on the idea of becoming a legal executive and then going on to qualify as a solicitor. Once I had reached this decision, I just needed to find somewhere to work.

As I didn't have the patience to wait around for a recruitment company to find me a job, I hand-wrote 64 letters (I remember each and every one) to solicitors across the south and south west, and was finally offered an interview and then a job at a firm in Reading.

I began my remote Institute of Legal Executives studies as soon as possible, but at the same time I was keen to make myself useful at the firm where I was working. I set up a debt recovery department and quickly 'learned by doing' debt recovery and litigation.

Once I had started working in litigation, I decided that I would specialise in personal injury claims, which at the time seemed to be a growing area of legal services (it was, but is not so much anymore). However, the firm where I worked didn't really have enough work to allow me to do this. I could wait around and hope that that would change, but I think you know by now that wasn't

going to happen. When I was offered a job elsewhere, at a firm that agreed to keep funding my studies, my current firm surprised me by saying they would rather keep me, let me generate my own caseload – and provide me with a marketing budget.

Another of the roles I had undertaken before joining the law had been working in marketing for the former owner of a London advertising agency. I had enjoyed it immensely, so this was just too good an offer for me to turn down. It wasn't that I didn't like working where I was, it was simply that they hadn't had the work that I wanted to do. Now that I was told I could create my own caseload and do my own marketing, I was a very happy man – well, most of the time anyway.

Which parts made me unhappy? Well, as I had a knack for marketing, I was soon undertaking marketing for the eight-partner firm across four locations. The parts that I found incredibly frustrating were the partner and committee meetings, where, in my humble opinion, nothing was ever achieved, or if it was it took about 300 hours longer than it should have done to reach a decision. I used to get so frustrated with the slow decision-making process that during one of these long-drawn-out meetings I actually prepared a dossier on how to run any meeting in less than 30 minutes and ensure you came out with decisions. I found it some years later and it did make me laugh.

My impatience was at the fore again when I started my law firm marketing consultancy in 2003, and I was quickly reminded of the frustrations of my practising days whenever I started working with any firm that had more than one partner.* Suddenly, what I had

* If you are operating in a partnership where every marketing decision needs the approval of all partners, you absolutely have to fix this. My solution is simple. One partner, that is probably you as you are reading this book, is given responsibility for all marketing for one year. He or she is given a budget, and carte blanche to make decisions and take action. At the end of that year the other partners look through the results. If the marketing has put more money into the bank than it took out (by a ratio of at least three to one) then let them carry on. Problem solved!

advised my clients was the best course of action would lead to a two-, three- or six-month debate, back and forth from meeting to meeting, about whether they should do what I was suggesting. It wasn't that they weren't paying me during this period – that wasn't the point. My joy from doing what I do comes from agreeing a course of action, implementing it, and then seeing the results and my clients' happiness with these results.

Getting Results

This is what drives me and keeps me going. The idea of taking six months to make a simple decision came close to driving me insane. As Einstein so eloquently said, doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different outcomes is the definition of insanity, so I knew that this could not continue.

I therefore made the decision to work in a consultancy capacity only with decision makers: people I could agree a course of action with knowing that they would instantly say yes, and that if they did so they wouldn't come back to me a few weeks later to say that their other partners had pooh-poohed our agreed plan of action. These people are as keen as I am to see results, and as they are not shackled by other partners they are able to take fast action, often leaving their competitors scratching their heads about how this once-small law firm now seems to be bigger than they are, yet still has only one equity partner.

It is not that I don't work in some capacity with larger firms; I do. I run AdWords campaigns for some of them, but only if the person I am working with has the power to make decisions on behalf of their department. I also have many larger firms that are members of my Marketing4Solicitors service, using my ideas to grow their law firm.

But in a consultancy capacity I will only work with someone who has the authority to make decisions and see them through to the end. My book is therefore geared towards them, because I

know from many years' experience that I can transform their firm for them, and make their life a lot more enjoyable.

Let's look at how, shall we?

Chapter 1

The Law Firm Growth Formula

This book contains a formula to grow your law firm. It is tried and tested. It works. Or to put it correctly: it works if you work it.

If you are absolutely committed to growing your law firm and are prepared to put in some time learning and applying this formula, you will be successful. I have used this system with my consultancy clients time and time again.

The *Only* time that it doesn't work is when a solicitor doesn't apply the formula consistently or follow the processes that they have put in place to make it work in the first place.

It is not that this formula is particularly convoluted or difficult, and the processes that you have to put in place are all relatively straightforward, but you do have to follow them and monitor the results consistently to ensure that you are continually growing your law firm. This is where many of the problems arise. A solicitor might start to follow the formula but then other 'stuff' gets in the way, or they decide to start a completely different marketing tactic that simply won't work, but because it looks more fun, they stop

before they achieve the results that would otherwise follow. If I had a penny for every time a solicitor has said to me, 'But I really want to do some social media marketing because it looks so much fun, Nick', I would be very wealthy.

If I do not manage to convince them that social media alone will never transform a law firm, they go off and waste countless hours and often thousands of pounds on social media training and even a company to help them, before finally realising that it simply doesn't work (see Chapter 13 for the reasons why). However, following my formula does work.

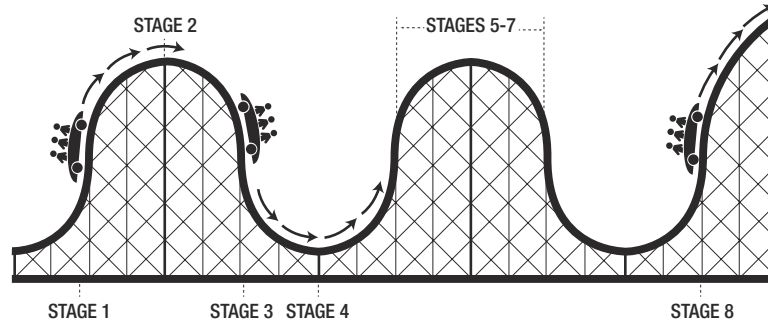
You will no doubt have heard of the proverb that says if you give a man a fish you feed him for a day, but teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

With this book, I aim to go one step further for you and for your law firm. I want to teach you how to fish and then, more importantly, teach you how to employ fishermen to fish for you while you simply monitor them and watch your catch grow continually.

My aim for you is that you should do as little as possible when it comes to growing your law firm. I want you to be in control of everything that is happening, but actually doing very little to make it happen. It is when I achieve this with my law firm clients that they really start to enjoy running their law firm and living their life. My heartfelt desire is that you achieve both of these outcomes. If you are prepared to put in some time understanding the marketing tactics that really do work for law firms, then some more time implementing them for your firm (usually by outsourcing the whole or most of the day-to-day work), and then consistently tracking the results so that you can improve on them, you will succeed. You cannot fail to.

The reason that this formula is so important is because it will replace the usual method by which law firms attempt to grow, which I have seen so many times and which leads only to frustration, limited results and often also to burnout.

The Law Firm Marketing Roller Coaster



Let's look at each stage of the The Law Firm Marketing Roller Coaster in turn.

STAGE 1: You have no clients. You start frantically looking for clients. You contact old clients, referrers and start advertising anywhere that you can think of to make your telephone ring. You work tirelessly to achieve some new client instructions.

STAGE 2: Eventually your endeavours pay off (although you are not sure what worked exactly). You have more work than you can handle, for now at least. You ease back on the marketing so that you can concentrate on the work.

STAGE 3: Your instructions start to dwindle; you are coming down the other side of the marketing roller coaster hill and it doesn't feel good. You are sure it will pick up soon though, but it doesn't, so you career towards stage 4.

STAGE 4: You are back where you started, so you do what you did at the beginning and start marketing frantically.

STAGE 5-7: Exactly the same thing happens again over the next few months. You become too busy again because of your frantic marketing activity, so you stop marketing and start heading downwards on the marketing roller coaster. When you reach the bottom, you start marketing again, then stop again when you reach the bottom of the roller coaster. You are tired, bored and frustrated at your lack

of progress. You decide that there has to be a better way. There is: the law firm growth formula, and you commit to applying it to your law firm.

STAGE 8: With a strong commitment to break your current cycle of feast and famine, you implement the law firm growth formula one step at a time until you start to see a consistent rise to success. Your volume of instructions simply keeps increasing. You are not coming down the other side of this marketing roller coaster any longer because you are now following a proven formula.

Let's take a look at the formula.

The Law Firm Growth Formula

The law firm growth formula entails:

1. measuring your current performance accurately, so that you can then improve your results;
2. implementing improvements to your current 'client conversion process', that is, the system that you follow to convert a prospect into a client (whether you have committed this system to paper or not);
3. adding new marketing arteries from the New Client Flowcast, a.k.a. 'with or without you' (wow) marketing (post);
4. continually monitoring your performance;
5. adding new marketing arteries, or, when they are all in place, ensuring that you are optimising them before moving onto the marketing capillaries to help you reach your new, now expanded, goals; and
6. changing your goals as your law firm grows.

I have used some terminology here that might need some further explanation, so read on.

The Client Conversion Process

The 'client conversion process' is the system that you follow to move the client along the path from being someone in need of legal

services to the point where they instruct your firm to represent them. In my experience, very few firms actually have any system for recording this process, and worse still, those that do rarely manage to follow it, which is a huge and costly mistake.

Implementing a 'client conversion process' and then following it, alongside constantly trying to make small improvements, is certain to lead to increased income from people who have already found your law firm.

Increasing income through improving conversion rates

Service Provided	Number of Enquiries Per Month	Average Costs Per Client	Current Percentage Conversion rate (ie enquiries/clients x 100)	Costs Per Month	Conversion rate after implement changes	Increase in Costs Per Month	Increase in Costs Per Month
Conveyancing	20	£500	30% (6 clients)	£3,000	50% (10 clients)	£2,000	£24,000
Employment Law	20	£750	30% (6 clients)	£4,500	50% (10 clients)	£3,000	£36,000
Personal Injury	20	£1,500	30% (6 clients)	£9,000	50% (10 clients)	£6,000	£72,000
Probate	20	£3,000	30% (6 clients)	£18,000	50% (10 clients)	£12,000	£144,000
Wills	20	£150	30% (6 clients)	£900	50% (10 clients)	£600	£7,200

Looking at the table above, you can see what a difference it can make to your financial health if you can make even small improvements to your conversion percentage, which is calculated in the following way:

Number of people instructing you **divided by** number of people enquiring about your services **multiplied by** 100

Therefore, if 50 people enquire about your services in any given month, but only 10 people instruct you, your conversion rate will be $10/50 \times 100 = 20\%$.

I will show you in more detail how to measure this and then, far more importantly, how to improve on it, so that you can generate more income from the people who already find your law firm but are choosing not to instruct you. This is the fastest way to increase your income. It costs you very little aside from your time to implement the improvements, so it is an incredibly important part of my formula.

If you miss this part out, you will be throwing away instructions month by month. This is bad enough if you do not have many of the marketing arteries from the New Client Flowcast model (below) in place, but if you then add more of the arteries to your system without improving your client conversion process, you will waste more money every month as you fail to convert even more potential clients into new instructions.

The New Client Flowcast

Before I explain the New Client Flowcast and show you a diagram, let me explain something that might surprise, and even please, you. Most law firms can thrive by implementing just three or four marketing tactics. Whether you are a sole practitioner or a thriving mid-level law firm, there will usually only be three or four marketing tactics that regularly produce new client instructions of any magnitude.

Does that surprise you? I can tell you that it surprised me when I really started studying marketing many years ago. At the law firm I first worked for, all of our clients came in via three or four regular marketing tactics.

When I established my consultancy in 2003, I thought I might find that other firms needed many more, but that isn't the case at all. When applied well, three or four marketing tactics are usually all that is needed.

I will explain in detail which three or four later in the book, but for now I simply want to explain the New Client Flowcast and how it works.

The New Client Flowcast



In the diagram above, look at the main river: it represents your profits, and it is filled by your flow of new client instructions. What makes these clients come to you? Your marketing arteries and capillaries.

There are four marketing arteries. These are the four most effective marketing methods for solicitors in my automated marketing strategy for growth; here they are:

- A website that is designed to make your telephone ring and grows consistently;
- An email marketing database and monthly email;
- Google AdWords; and
- Referrals.

I also call my automated marketing strategy With Or Without You (wowy) marketing, because just like one of the great Irish

rock bands more famous songs, it keeps on bringing new clients to your door every month *With Or Without You*. wowY marketing is crucial to the savvy law firm business owner, because it allows them to scale up their law firm without making themselves a slave to it.

My mission in life is to enable solicitors to have a thriving law firm at the same time as being able to live a good and a full life. So often over the years I have met law firm owners who come to me at the point of 'burn out', caused by trying to grow their law firm or even by just trying to keep it going. That is no absolutely no way to live. In my opinion, we get just one shot at this planet earth thing, so why make it a long, hard slog when it can be a blissful jog?

It doesn't have to be like this. You can grow your firm and live a good and happy life if you spend some time implementing the right wowY marketing for your law firm.

I will show you how to do this in the later chapters, but I wanted you to know right now that there is a better and easier way for you to grow your firm than you might have been experiencing up until this point.

What Gets Measured Gets Better

If you want to know which of your marketing methods are working and which are costing you money with absolutely no results, you must live by my saying that 'What gets measured gets better'. Measure every marketing activity you undertake. If it is not bringing in more fees than it costs, change and improve it. If you still can't make it work after changing and improving it several times, stop it and try something else.

This is such a simple point yet it is in nearly every case overlooked by law firms, either deliberately because it seems too much like 'hard work' or, usually, through blind ignorance. Sorry to be brutal, but my job here is to point out where you have been going wrong and to ensure you change your ways to build the practice of your dreams.

The great news is that it really isn't hard to measure where all

your new business is coming from, so the small amount of hard work to start doing this now will reward you many times over in the future with new clients and will also save you from wasting your hard-earned money on marketing that simply isn't working.

Chapter 2

Your Growth Mantra

Now this is not a heavy, dull, traditional marketing book with lots of complicated definitions and systems that will mean nothing to you. All these types of textbooks are dry, dull and mostly irrelevant to what you need to know to run a successful business. They might help you to pass an exam, just like the law books I was forced to study for years to qualify as a solicitor, but once you have passed your exams you can forget about using the textbooks to help you in your day-to-day job because they mean nothing in the real world!

There are so many different definitions for marketing, and some of them are long and convoluted enough to curdle milk. I believe that my job is to make it easy for my clients to 'get it'. Here is the only definition and checklist, rolled into one, that you will ever need for marketing your law firm:

■ **Clients First!**

If you put your clients first in all that you do and say, you will have great success when it comes to marketing your business. Every single time you provide your legal services, write a page for your website, prepare an advertisement, write a direct mail letter or an email newsletter for your clients, you must read it back and

say, 'Have I put my Clients First?' If not, you need to go back and rewrite it.

In the world in which we now live, where reviews posted online remain there forever more, it is absolutely critical that the legal services you provide are as good as they can be.

Whenever you are providing your service, ask yourself this question and genuinely mean it: 'How can I make this service better and easier for my clients?' This question alone, if used regularly, can and will add more clients into your law firm.

In the marketing context, let me give you an example of how this might work in practice. On a law firm website, the opening paragraph on the home page might well be as follows:

'We were established in 1840 in our offices in Basingstoke ...'

On reading that, ask yourself if the clients are being put first in that opening line? No – the opening is all about the law firm and nothing to do with their clients, isn't it? If I am a potential client of that firm, why does it matter that they have been there since 1840? It doesn't really, in the way it is presented above, but it could be given meaning for me as a potential client if it were changed as follows:

'If you are a small business we can save you thousands of pounds of unnecessary tax and expenses every single year, using our expertise gained from helping businesses for over 100 years.'

Now that puts clients first, doesn't it? If you are a small business, you are now thinking 'tell me more', aren't you?

With reference to my own business I could say:

'I established my law firm marketing consultancy in 2003 to use all of my legal marketing expertise to help solicitors to grow their practices.'

That's a bit 'me, me, me' though isn't it? It would be better if I said this, would it not?

'If you own or run a law firm and are looking to grow it substantially, I can show you exactly what you need to do to achieve this.'

Put your clients first, always, and everything in your practice from this moment onwards will be a lot easier for you.

Chapter 3

Why Should I Choose Your Law Firm?

This is a really important question for you to ask yourself. It is not one for you to brush off, thinking that it doesn't apply to you. If you can't answer this question, why should you expect your clients to choose you? Quite simply, they won't. You must be able to answer this question.

For my business, I think I have nailed this now.

Q Why should someone choose me?

A You should work with me if you are the owner or major decision maker of a law firm and you are serious about growing your law firm quickly.

So how can you explain in a few words exactly why a client should choose you? The good news – it is really quite simple, so let me show you exactly how you do this.

You may see the title of this chapter and think that it is not a very glamorous or exciting chapter, or that it will not teach you anything new, or immediately help you to sell more of your services, but I can absolutely guarantee you that it will.

Unless and until you understand how to write or talk about your services in the right frame for your clients, selling your services across every type of media will always be far more difficult than it need be. You will end up spending more money on printed media, more money online, and more money on every type of marketing tactic that you undertake just to keep your telephone ringing.

However, when you understand how important your message is, everything else you do will become so much more effective. You will be able to spend less on marketing to acquire more clients.

So what do I mean when I use the ‘sales’ word that solicitors generally do not like to use, and tell you that you need to ‘Craft’ a compelling sales message to attract and convert more clients? Surely you supply legal services and the world should be buying them from you and only you? Wouldn’t that be nice?

Unfortunately, the world has changed, and whereas the sign ‘Solicitors’ above an office door used to be enough to have people finding you day in and day out, clients have become a lot more discerning, a lot harder to attract and then convert into new instructions, and less loyal than they ever used to be, even when you do win their business.

If you think about the sector that has perhaps had the most media coverage (not necessarily in a good way) and faced the biggest changes, the personal injury sector, there is an interesting lesson to learn. The personal injury sector has seen major upheaval, and claims companies were at the heart of this. Why, you might ask yourself – as I know a lot of solicitors did – were claims companies able to come into an established market and attract clients away from solicitors, then sell their instruction back to solicitors?

I think the major point is that they got their message right. They understood how to attract and convert clients better than solicitors. If this were not true, clients would have continued to go straight to the solicitors.

There were other factors, too, that created this new tier, or obstruction, in the personal injury sector:

- Claims companies set aside large marketing budgets to attract new clients, and solicitors were not doing this.
- Claims companies understood that one of the ongoing fears that prevented clients from contacting a solicitor was that it would cost them money.
- Claims companies made their sales message very easy to understand. They highlighted that all initial enquiries were free and claims were made on a 'no win, no fee' basis.

Of course, we all know that in many cases there was a lot of small print, leading to the client losing a lot of compensation, but this just highlights the point of how important it is to get your 'opening message' right. If you do not get this right, you miss the chance to win the client's instructions for good.

You can say the same about the Wills market, with unregulated Will writers, and even now about the business-to-business legal services market, with the selling of employment law services by the likes of Peninsula and many others.

These companies have come into the established legal services market, crafted a compelling message, and taken business away from solicitors. They have often packaged the service differently, or priced it differently, as with Peninsula, but ultimately it is the same service but sold with a different sales message.

If you can get your sales message right, you will maintain and strengthen your position, so that you can attract as many clients as you want and need to run a successful and profitable practice.

What Is Your Compelling Sales Message?

So, what am I looking to help you to achieve now? At the end of this section I expect you to be able to summarise in one sentence why I should choose your firm over and above your competitors in a way that appeals to your ideal clients.

You must be able to convey concisely and clearly who you work with and how you help them, so that if I stumble across your

website, see your advertisement in the local paper, or meet you in person at a networking or social event, you can summarise why you are the best, and the only, firm to help me with my current legal needs.

Once you have this initial summary, you will need to develop your message beyond a single sentence so that it runs through all of your marketing materials, from your website to your brochures, and from your advertisements to your office window displays.

Let me show you some real examples of what you can create after you have completed this exercise, to help you to see why it can be so powerful.

Employment law solicitor: ‘We only act for employees!’

This removes all ambiguity, making the marketing message so much clearer and resulting in more instructions.

Conveyancing solicitor: ‘We will never pay estate agents for referrals, which means our advice is totally tailored to your needs.’

This removes any undue pressure from a third party that may conflict with your clients’ interests. Surely that makes complete sense? Yet so many solicitors do pay referral fees to an agent, who so often has interests contradictory to those of their client.

Personal injury solicitor: ‘You will always keep 100% of your compensation.’

If this had been on solicitors’ lists of top five benefits they would never have accepted work from Claims Direct or The Accident Group. However, as we know, many solicitors did and this cost them dearly in the long run in so many ways.

Having this compelling sales message would also have allowed solicitors to promote this message heavily, at the expense of claims companies that did not operate in this way.

Overall, understanding what makes you different or attractive to your clients can have a dramatic impact on all of your marketing activities in many obvious ways (and many subtle ones, too, as shown above).

How to Craft Your Compelling Message

The next stage is to identify how and why you are different from your competitors so that you can create your compelling sales message.

I will provide you with the tools to do this easily, so do not worry if this sounds like hard work; it will not be. I know that you are good at the service you provide, but that you have probably been too modest and perhaps unable to summarise succinctly why you are the best firm for your clients. This will not be the case after working through the next stage.

Whenever you are thinking about marketing your legal practice, always, always, always think 'Clients First' before finalising your marketing activity. Does what you are saying or have written speak solely and squarely in terms of the benefits that your clients will receive if they use your service over and above the service offered by your competitors? If not, go back to the drawing board and start again until you can read back your message and nod your head because it speaks soundly and squarely to your ideal client.

There are two simple steps to creating your sales message/'why choose us' statement.

First, you use your own understanding of why you believe that you are good at the service that you provide. Second, you use your clients' feedback to ensure that you are on the right track. Don't worry, I am not talking about running a live client workshop here, just asking you to draw on feedback that you already have received from your clients for a job well done.

Identifying the areas in which you excel is crucial and will be very informative for you. I have performed this exercise with hundreds of solicitors. Some find it easy, others really struggle. All that I know is that every time it is performed, it is a real eye opener for the participants. I know that it will be the same for you too.

I am a bit of a traditionalist in many ways, despite my love of technology, so my advice is to print off the following table and head off to a quiet space such as your library or your favourite coffee

shop to work through the exercise. Don't do it at your desk – the marketing mindset is very different from the one you use to work on legal matters.

Compelling Sales Message Exercise

The first exercise is to grab a sheet of A4 and draw three columns in it so that it looks like the table below (alternatively, head to the book resources section at www.samsonconsulting.co.uk/growth and you will find a prepared 'Features to Benefits' Word document that you can download and print off.)

Features to benefits

Features	Features to benefits conversion statement	Benefits
We were formed in 1832	this means that	We have substantial experience that we can use to ensure your transaction proceeds as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

Step 1: What are you good at?

Write everything down that comes to mind in terms of what makes your law firm special in the 'features' column. Do not stop writing until you have put down at least 20 reasons, but possibly as many as 50. Give yourself at least 30 minutes to do this. It will be time well spent.

Ideally you should run out of ideas before seeking help from my list of questions below, to ensure that you haven't missed anything, so I have put my prompt sheet over the page in the hope that you will draw on your own ideas first.

When you have exhausted your own list (and only then), use my list of questions to help you to come up with more. (You can download a version to print here: www.samsonconsulting.co.uk/growth).

Did you look ahead? Oh dear – it is only yourself you are fooling if you did, but here is some help for you if you haven't yet come up with 50 reasons why a client should choose your law firm.

Features Checklist

- How long have you been in business?
- How big are you?
How small are you?
- Do you serve any niche business areas?
- What are your opening hours?
Do you have a Freephone telephone number?
- What are your client service level standards?
 - Calls answered within X rings
 - Letters replied to within Y days
 - Emails replied to within Z minutes
 - Why should you be the business of choice for your clients?
- Who are your best known clients?
- If you have a questionnaire for clients, how often do you receive 10 out of 10 or excellent?
- What geographical areas do you cover?
- What legal services do you provide?
- Do you work well with any special categories of clients or niche businesses?
- Do you work well with any special categories of referrers?
- Are you the cheapest?
- Are you the most expensive?
- Are you the fastest?
- Are you the most thorough?
- Are you the friendliest?

Step 2: Features to benefits conversion table

Now that you have your lovely long list of features, you need to turn these into the corresponding benefit to your client. Most solicitors think of features, whereas all your clients want to know is what the 'benefit' for them is, or in other words, what's in it for them?

For example, you may have said that your firm was formed in 1832, which probably matters a great deal to you, but is largely irrel-

evant to your clients. For them, the year of your firm coming into being is not important; all that they care about is why you are the best solicitor for their job in hand. So how do you turn 1832 from a feature into a benefit? You use the feature-to-benefit conversion statement 'this means that', contained in the 'Features to benefits' table above, to arrive at the following:

We were formed in 1832. This means that we have substantial experience, which we use to ensure your transaction proceeds as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

Suddenly, what was just a feature now speaks to your client in terms of why they should choose your firm.

This exercise helps you to understand why, in your clients' eyes you are the right solicitor for them. Once you have completed this exercise for all of your features, you will have gained a much deeper understanding of your firm. You now have to do some culling of your list to narrow it down to a smaller list, but one that contains all of your most powerful benefits.

First, quickly strike through any benefit that you realise is not of great value to your clients until you have around ten or twelve strong benefits.

Step 3: Using your clients to confirm your choices

Now it is time to run your answers past those of your clients. How?

Think of three matters that you have completed in the last few months that have had a great reaction or response from the client. If you do not earn fees any more, ask your fee earners to provide this information.

If the client provided a written letter of thanks, excellent. However, more often than not it will be face-to-face or telephone feedback, so get your team to summarise this feedback in writing so that you can compare it against your own results in the exercise above.

This is a crucial part of the exercise, so please do not skip it. I mentioned at the beginning that this really will dramatically improve the results of all of your marketing activities from this

moment onwards, so a little time spent now will pay you back many, many times over.

Choose your top five benefits

Once you have completed this exercise, it is time to pick the top five reasons why clients choose your law firm. Go through the responses received from your clients and compare them with your own list of 10 or 12 benefits to see which ones match most closely the ones that your clients highlighted in their feedback of your services.

Remember that your clients are the most important people in this equation, so if you see a common response from your clients on a particular aspect of your service that could be a real hidden gem, you need to incorporate this into your list.

You can learn so much from your existing clients that will help you to secure many new clients like them in the future, so please make sure you always listen to them.

Ideal Client Feedback

The final stage involves obtaining some one-to-one client feedback to make sure you are selecting the benefits that will appeal most to your future clients.

You should have some clients that are your ideal clients. They provide you with regular instructions and refer you to other people or businesses. You like working with them and you wish you had more clients just like them. You need to ask them to look at your list of five benefits and ask them which of the benefits are the most important items on the list for them, and whether there are any others that they would add.

You only need to do this with three or four clients to confirm that you have chosen the right benefits.

NOTE: If during these discussions with your clients they offer you some feedback along the lines of ‘I really liked the way you ...’ please immediately ask them to put that in writing to you. You can never have enough client reviews.

Your Final Statement

You will now have your final list of benefits, as approved by your ideal clients. Now is the time to print them out and keep them to hand so that you can quickly check back whenever you are preparing any marketing materials for your firm, to ensure that you are 'on message'.

For Larger Firms

If you are a large firm with many different departments providing different legal services I suggest that you follow this process:

1. Go through the steps above first when referring to the firm as a whole, so you have an understanding of your core sales message across the board.
2. Repeat the process for each of your areas of expertise so that you are then creating a compelling sales message for each of your legal services.

Implement

Now that you have clearly defined your service offering, what are you going to do with all of this information?

Over the course of the next few weeks you will need to make changes to all of your marketing materials. If you have done this exercise thoroughly, you will find that many of your marketing communications do not accurately reflect the major benefits of your services to your clients, so you need to correct this.

Review everything and ensure that your message is consistent in all of the following places:

- Your website
- Your new client letters
- Your advertising
- Your printed media (brochures, leaflets, etc.)
- Your message when you are out and about networking

Remember, if your message does not convey the benefits of your service to your clients, you are wasting your money!

Your Service Summary

Once you have finished the exercise above it is worth turning your key features and benefits into a useful sales aid that can be used whenever you are talking about your practice.

You may well have heard of the one-minute pitch, or 'elevator pitch', as it is known across the pond. The scenario is that you are given just one minute to pitch your business to potentially your biggest client: what are you going to say?

This may not be the way it was intended to be used, but I find that when I take solicitors through this exercise and they repeat the process several times, they feel much more comfortable answering the inevitable question 'So what is it that you do, then?'

I don't like to think of the outcome as a 'sales pitch', as I know many solicitors are horrified by that word, but as more of a 'service summary'. So how do you write your service summary?

Quite simply, I suggest that you answer these three questions:

1. Who do you serve?
2. What results do you achieve for them?
3. How can you prove this by referencing a recent client experience?

For my business, answering these three questions leads to this statement:

I work with law firm owners who want to grow their law firm. I tell them what to do, how to do it and how to outsource it all quickly so that it happens with or without them. One client recently trebled their turnover in a matter of months.

The equivalent statement for a law firm might be:

We work with small businesses who need prompt and practical legal solutions. We discover what is important to them so that we can provide them with the best legal solution while they concentrate on running their business. We recently avoided costly and lengthy litigation for one of our clients, saving them in excess of £10,000 and several months fighting a case with a supplier.

I can't overstate how useful it is to go through this exercise several times, to become really comfortable with the benefits you are offering to your clients.

Once you have done this, it is a good idea to write a different summary for each of your different areas of law, so that you have a good answer whenever you are asked what you do. The more you practice this the easier it becomes. In time, you will find that you can shorten this to the point of one sentence, or in my case four words: fast law firm growth!

My service offering has gone through many re-incarnations, and this one, for now, sums up what I do in all aspects of my business. You will be able to do the same for your practice and service summary too.

Chapter 4

How Many of Your Prospects Become Clients?

Whenever I visit a new legal practice I am often asked which is the first ‘new’ marketing activity that they should undertake to generate new clients for the firm? ‘Shall we try social media marketing, or radio, Google AdWords or Facebook advertising?’ The answer is always the same: ‘None of the above.’

Improving New Client Conversion Processes

I know that I can help any law firm to generate more new client instructions more quickly simply by improving the process they follow for dealing with all new client enquiries. I also know that this is one of the most profitable uses of their time, as it costs the firm little or nothing to do, yet provides huge financial benefits in terms of new instructions received.

So, if this is the case, why do firms often show such reluctance to do this? I believe it is because this is not particularly exciting.

However, the longer I am involved in the marketing of legal services, the more I appreciate that it is the drilling down to these finer details that spells the difference between those firms doing incredibly well and those just getting by.

Which do you want to be?

I want to give you two explanations for how improving the way you deal with all new client enquiries can have such a dramatic impact on the success of your practice, making every marketing activity so much more effective for you. I appreciate that some people like figures, others like stories, so as I aim to please, here is an example in each category for you.

Number Crunching

Here is a simple table showing how getting this right can make a large and almost immediate impact to your monthly finances. I have included a range of different services, so you should be able to see how much of an impact you could have on your practice, depending on how many of the services you provide.

Projected income from increases in conversion rates

Service Provided	Number of Enquiries Per Month	Average Costs Per Client	Current Percentage Conversion rate (ie enquiries/clients x 100)	Costs Per Month	Conversion Rate After Implement Changes	Increase in Costs Per Month	Increase in Costs Per Month
Conveyancing	20	£500	30% (6 clients)	£3,000	50% (10 clients)	£2,000	£24,000
Employment Law	20	£750	30% (6 clients)	£4,500	50% (10 clients)	£3,000	£36,000
Personal Injury	20	£1,500	30% (6 clients)	£9,000	50% (10 clients)	£6,000	£72,000
Probate	20	£3,000	30% (6 clients)	£18,000	50% (10 clients)	£12,000	£144,000
Wills	20	£150	30% (6 clients)	£900	50% (10 clients)	£600	£7,200

These are modest enquiry numbers, so are completely achievable. I appreciate that you might only offer one service, but even so there are considerable improvements to be made. If you offer several services, you can see that it can have a dramatic impact on your turnover and profitability.

In terms of conversion, improving your conversion rate from 30% to 50% is also achievable; I have done it now with enough firms to know this. These are realistic figures and they can be achieved by your firm if you set your mind to achieving them.

New Client Narrative

For those of you not quite so interested in the financial side of things, but much more so in the provision of a great service for your clients, here is a scenario based on my experience over the years both of engaging legal services for myself and also doing some mystery shopping for my clients. It is a very common scenario. My only question to you is, which firm are you?

Yvonne's choice

Yvonne is a married mother of three children; her family are in the process of moving house.

She asks her friends if they can recommend a solicitor but none has used one recently so cannot help.* Yvonne decides to call three local firms that she has found on the internet.

Smithers Jones is the first firm she calls. They have the most professional-looking website and she can tell they keep it up to date because they have a great blog and some really useful information to download about the house moving process. She expects that as

* Interestingly, in polls people say that they would go on a recommendation if they needed a solicitor, but when people who have actually instructed a solicitor are asked how they found them, recommendation is very low on the list. I am certain that the reason for this is that people do not use a solicitor regularly and therefore if someone asks for a recommendation they cannot help them because they do not remember the name of a law firm (unless of course the solicitor they used has read this book in which case they can easily recommend a firm because they send a very informative and useful monthly newsletter).

long as the price is not too much more than the other firms she is going to call she will use this firm.

She calls them and has a very satisfactory conversation with Mrs Jones. The price sounds reasonable and within 10 minutes of the end of the call she has an email quotation from them. She is suitably impressed.

Bradley Smythe is the next firm she calls. Their website is not as good as Smithers Jones's, but is updated regularly. However, it does not offer any extra useful information. The price is slightly cheaper than Smithers Jones, but Smithers Jones remain the favourites, particularly when Yvonne receives no email confirming the price or providing contact details following the call with Bradley Smythe.

Michael Smith is the last solicitor she calls. She thought of not bothering to call him as she is bored with speaking to solicitors now, but decided to force herself to do so [I know from my own experience that this is exactly how you begin to feel when choosing a solicitor]. She can tell from the website that he is a sole practitioner. His website is not quite so comprehensive as the others, in fact it is quite sparse, just listing the services provided, a few testimonials and contact details, but she likes the fact that it is easy to find a picture of the man she will be speaking to and that the firm prides itself on a very personal and professional service.

Michael Smith's price is the same as Smithers Jones's, but he seemed far more interested in finding out why Yvonne was moving and what deadlines were important to her. He spent longer on the telephone with her than the other two firms put together, but mostly he was talking about her needs, so the time went quickly. He confirmed a price and an email arrived within the hour. She was now torn between Smithers Jones and Michael Smith. She decided to make her final decision in a couple of days.

The next morning a letter arrived from Michael Smith, confirming the quotation that he had provided on the telephone. He also enclosed a brochure about his services that included a lot of feedback from satisfied clients. She was suitably impressed, particularly as she did not receive anything from the other two firms. She expected to receive their letters the next day. Michael Smith was clearly the favourite now.

Two days passed and she had received nothing else from the other two firms. She was about to call Michael Smith to confirm she would like to him to help her to move house when her telephone rang: ‘Hello Yvonne, this is Michael Smith. I am just calling to check you received my letter and quotation, and to see if you had any unanswered questions that I can help you with?’

Michael Smith was duly instructed!

Which Firm Are You?

If the figures did not convince you that improving your process for dealing with new client enquiries is essential, I hope that this very real case study did.

I run a service for solicitors called Marketing4Solicitors. Through this service they receive access to online marketing precedents, training videos, and the ability to ask me questions. I ran a survey with my Marketing4Solicitors members and these were the results on follow up of new enquiries:

Always follow up	8%
Sometimes follow up	17%
Never follow up	75%

If you bear in mind that Marketing4Solicitors members are probably in the top 10% of forward-thinking law firms, this figure absolutely terrifies me. It is why this chapter is so important.

The changes this chapter recommends involve only a nominal investment, yet they make every other marketing activity that you undertake far more successful, that is, they provide you with more clients for no extra spend, so it is vital that you take action once you have read this chapter.

Choosing a solicitor is ‘an informed decision’: your prospects are making an informed decision about which solicitor they believe will do the best job possible for them. They can only base this decision on what you say and what you do. We all know that actions speak much louder than words.

Remember, I am buying/choosing a professional services provider. I expect you to show me how professional you are in all that you do, from start to finish, so surely an email, letter and follow-up telephone call is the minimum I should expect from you when I make an enquiry about your services, isn't it?

Start Measuring

Your First Measure

You have to begin by measuring your current position first so that you have a starting point. Then you simply work on improving that position.

You need, therefore, to start is by counting your current enquiries and calculating how many of those turn into new clients.

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{New client instructions} \div \text{by new enquiries received} \times 100 \\ & = \text{your current conversion rate} \end{aligned}$$

Continue to do this for a couple of months to build up a picture of the average conversion rates you are achieving. This will provide you with your 'baseline', that is, the conversion rate you will now constantly try to beat by improving your processes.

If you are a sole practitioner, you will be able to introduce new client procedures very easily. If you are a larger firm with several departments, you might choose to start with one department, then roll out the process once you see how effective it is. If you decide to do it this way, I strongly advise you to start in the department with the highest average fee per transaction. This way you will see some very pleasing results in terms of increases in income!

Your next measure

Once you have your baseline, you can start to implement the changes suggested in this chapter, and once you have done this, continue to assess your conversion rate on a month by month basis.

Once you get past the initial inertia experienced when setting up any new process, this will become second nature. It is a process

that every law firm should undertake, but I know most do not. It will put you at a distinct advantage over your competition and will be an invaluable use of your time.

Even when you can see the impact your changes are making, continue to tweak your new client conversion process – this should never stop. If you can keep making small adjustments that improve your conversion rates, your bottom line profits will continue to rise. Keep going, always.

One thing is certain: once you start to apply the changes in this chapter you will see an improvement in your conversion rate, which in turn means an improvement in your profits.

To continue reading, click the link to view and buy the book on Amazon:

<https://amzn.to/3gTYBII>