

Making it rain

Women lawyers have unique talents that serve them and their firms well in the increasingly competitive field of rainmaking.

By Joan Paul and Allison Wolf

Recent reports have made clear that women lawyers still face many challenges in the traditional law firm. But these lawyers are also slowly changing how firms market themselves to clients, coming together to explore how to develop business in a manner that plays to their special strengths and creates a different market dynamic. Here are just some of the unique ways in which women are revolutionizing lawyer marketing.

The art of conversation

One of women's special strengths is conversation, a skill that lawyers simply must possess in order to succeed. "Marketing (and selling) begin to work," law practice management guru David Maister recently wrote, "when a conversation moves away from being a role-to-role exchange of capabilities, contracts, and costs, and becomes a person-to-person interactive dialogue about ideas, beliefs, and perspectives."

Patricia McLaren, Regional Manager of Client Development with Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP in Calgary, remarks that the women in her firm known for their rainmaking ability possess both standout professional credentials and strong personal connections with their clients and colleagues. They are gifted at using skillful dialogue to connect with clients or team up with colleagues in developing a practice.

"Women are great listeners," adds Adam Pekarsky, Director of Professional Development and Recruitment at Fraser Milner Casgrain LLP in Edmonton. Women can use their listening skills to find a common point of interest with clients, he says, because they enjoy engaging in a broad spectrum of topics and connecting personally, whereas men tend to focus more on specific topics that don't easily provide common points of interest.

Emotionally intelligent

Jessica Green, counsel at Petro-Canada in Calgary, emphasizes that while expertise and reputation are critical, clients also value the emotional aspects of their relationships with the firm. In Green's experience, "the best rainmakers I know have extremely high EQs [Emotional Intelligence Quotients], are responsive, and don't take their clients for granted."

Emotional intelligence is very much a buzz phrase among psychologists and coaches. Lawyers with high EQs can perceive and harness emotions for solving problems and other tasks, as well as for understanding their



clients' and their own emotions accurately.

While not everyone has high EQ, lawyers can access coaches who specialize in the area to improve these skills. For example, a lawyer might score high on intrapersonal skills such as emotional self-awareness, assertiveness and independence, while posting lower scores in stress management or adaptability. Understanding your own emotional resources helps you relate more effectively with clients.

The big event

Female clients are growing, especially among the ranks of corporate counsel, so it makes sense to develop marketing events targeted specially to their needs and interests. Marketing events can be about more than schmoozing — they can enable the establishment of personal connections and trust.

When planning events for women, it's important to

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Marketing et réseautage au féminin.

Les avocates et les clientes sont en train de changer lentement la manière dont les cabinets font des affaires. Pour ce faire, elles capitalisent sur leurs forces spéciales, ce qui a pour effet de créer une dynamique nouvelle. En voici quelques exemples.

L'art de converser

Patricia McLaren, gestionnaire régionale du développement de la clientèle chez Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt s.r.l. à Calgary, remarque que les femmes oeuvrant au sein de son cabinet entretiennent des rapports personnels

point d'intérêt commun avec leurs clients, car elles aiment aborder un large éventail de sujets et interagir de manière personnelle, tandis que les hommes tendent à se centrer sur des thèmes spécifiques.

L'intelligence émotionnelle

Jessica Green, conseillère chez Petro-Canada à Calgary, met l'accent sur le fait qu'en plus de l'importance accordée à la réputation et à l'expertise, les clients valorisent les aspects relationnels liés aux émotions lorsqu'ils communiquent avec les membres des cabinets. « Les as du marketing ont un quotient émotionnel (QE) élevé, réagissent bien, et ne tiennent pas leurs clients pour acquis », souligne-t-elle.

Ceux qui ne disposent pas d'un tel QE peuvent néanmoins développer ce talent en bénéficiant de l'accès à des formations spécialisées.

Des événements prisés par les femmes

Le nombre de clientes étant croissant, il est normal que les

événements de marketing ciblent spécialement leurs besoins et intérêts distincts. Pour y parvenir avec brio, il convient de prendre en considération le fait que les femmes font face à des défis particuliers en matière d'équilibre entre vie personnelle et vie professionnelle. Une étude publiée dans la *Harvard Business Review* révélait récemment que même si les hommes aident davantage leurs conjointes à la maison que par le passé, les femmes consacrent à l'heure actuelle davantage d'heures à leurs fonctions de parent qu'en 1965.

Des événements pour des profes-

sionnelles très occupées qui mettent l'emphase sur le caractère distrayant et favorable à l'évasion auront donc de meilleures chances d'être bien perçus par la gent féminine. Reeva Finkel, associée chez Blaney McMurtry, organise chaque année un événement mode qui connaît un succès fou. Ce n'est pas que les journées de golf et les billets de hockey n'ont plus cours. Le mot d'ordre est plutôt de diversifier les activités.

Le mentorat

Des avocats salariés tels que Melanie McDonald de Fraser Milner Casgrain à Calgary présentent les relations entretenues avec des femmes associées seniors qui constituent une valeur ajoutée pour des avocates ambitieuses. Il reste que le petit nombre de femmes associées n'est pas suffisant pour répondre à de telles demandes. C'est probablement la raison pour laquelle les avocates se montrent de plus en plus intéressées à s'impliquer au sein d'organisations telles que le réseau professionnel des femmes de Vancouver et le Forum des avocates de l'ABC. Elles y établissent des réseaux et entrent en relation avec des clients potentiels.

Toutes les raisons sont bonnes pour que les femmes deviennent des as du marketing et contribuent ainsi au succès des cabinets de droit, ainsi qu'à leur propre rayonnement professionnel. Il s'agit pour elles d'un défi supplémentaire puisqu'elles ont souvent peu de temps à consacrer à de telles activités. Heureusement, elles peuvent compter sur leur sens de l'organisation aiguë et sur une discipline à toute épreuve. ■

— Yasmina El Jamaï

Le nombre de clientes étant croissant, il est normal que les événements de marketing ciblent spécialement leurs besoins et intérêts distincts.

solides avec leurs clients et collègues. Leur talent consiste à judicieusement employer le type de dialogue susceptible de les mettre en relation avec leurs clients ou en mode de collaboration avec leurs collègues. Tout un art qui n'est pas inné!

Adam Pekarsky en convient volontiers. Ce directeur du développement professionnel et du recrutement chez Fraser Milner Casgrain s.r.l. à Edmonton fait remarquer que les « femmes ont un sens de l'écoute extraordinaire ». Il ajoute que les femmes peuvent mettre à contribution leur capacité d'écoute aiguë pour trouver un

remember the extreme time challenges under which many professional women operate. Work-life balance might now be an issue for both genders, but women are still the ones who wind up with the bulk of child care.

In the September 2007 issue of *Harvard Business Review*, authors Alice Heagly and Linda Carli shared the surprising news that even with men helping more in the home, women are putting in more parenting hours now than they were in 1965. With more on their plates than ever, events for busy professional women must provide both an entertaining escape

from the work week and time-saving benefits.

Reeva Finkel, partner and chair of marketing at Blaney McMurtry LLP in Toronto, came up with a way of achieving both these objectives. Blaney's launched an annual fashion show event, which has been a huge hit with the firm's female clients. After being held each year in Blaney McMurtry's main reception area, the event grew so popular that it had to be moved to a larger venue.

Combining fashion, shopping, and networking, Finkel hit the target with Blaney's fashion show event. While hockey

tickets and golf days still have their place, and perhaps always will, a broader spectrum of marketing events is a refreshing change for clients of both genders. One might consider cooking classes or golf days combined with lessons as alternatives.

Professional networks

Increasingly, women are taking active roles in organizations such as the Professional Women's Network in Vancouver and the CBA's Women Lawyers' Forum to connect with other women lawyers and professionals. These groups are becoming a more important venue for women lawyers to build up referral networks and make contact with potential clients.

Young associates like Melanie McDonald of Fraser Milner Casgrain in Calgary welcome relationships with more senior female partners, who can make a big difference in the career of an up-and-coming lawyer. But not everyone works in a firm with a large percentage of female partners like Fraser Milner.

Regrettably, the small percentage of female partners isn't consistent with the growing number of women associates, and this makes it difficult to learn business development from female role models. When mentoring isn't available to a young lawyer, these professional associations can provide a valuable alternative.

Keys to success

With the growing number of women lawyers, why aren't more known for their role in the rainmaking game? Lack of time could be a culprit. All lawyers are busy, but women lawyers who enter motherhood are often unable to involve

themselves in the social networks that are crucial to rainmaking and advancing in their firms.

One way to overcome the time challenge is to become more methodical and direct about marketing. Finkel, when a mother with young children, adopted a strategy early: she began taking a few minutes on Sunday afternoons to make a to-do list of business development activities for the coming week. Then, on Monday mornings, she worked quickly to check them off her list, or scheduled them into her calendar for later in the week.

Finkel has carried out this habit for the past ten years, and has seen it contribute to her success as a rainmaker. While to-do lists alone won't make the rainmaker, the discipline of planning is a vital component to distinguishing oneself as a successful marketer.

Another business development challenge is closing the deal. Some lawyers report that because they develop such strong relationships with clients, they find it difficult to ask for their business. It's important to keep in mind that clients are also business-minded. They expect their lawyers to ask for their business. If you don't ask, you don't get. It can be as simple as that.

Rainmaking is the key to success in any business, and it took great rainmakers to build today's successful law firms. The reality is that women are now, more than ever, positioned to play a key role in this evolving world of the law firm, and are in the process of making it rain. ■

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