



WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS IN THIS TROUBLED ECONOMY?

BY SUSAN CARTER LIEBEL

Small business expert John Jantsch wrote a terrific article a few years ago titled *7 Time-Tested Ways to Dig Out of a Recession*. My position, however, is a little different. You should be doing these things *all the time*.

While you can read all seven ideas at johnjantsch.com, I'm going to highlight the third, sixth, and seventh points because I know the first two are the hardest for me and the last should be done religiously.

- 3) Get out from behind the computer. Building personal relationships is always in style. It's tempting to sit and write blog posts and participate on social networking sites, and while these aren't always bad things—sometimes you need to go out and shake some hands. Make it a point to go to several industry conferences every year. Join an industry or chamber type group and go to events where you can make connections with prospects and partners. Join

a referral group such as (fill in the blank) and participate. Go visit your customers and ask for referrals.

It is easy to get comfortable communicating solely on the Internet. It's fast, fun, and you are not locked into a schedule. However, if you are reading blogs on a regular basis, subscribing to RSS, or syncing your email with your iPhone, the fact is you are in the distinct minority. Most people—potential clients included—are simply not as technologically up to speed and by the time they figure out what you already do effectively, you will have moved on to something even more advanced.

While we socialize with like-minded professionals on the Internet, the fact is there is a huge gap between you and the many potential clients and referrers of potential clients out there who could use your services. Get out, mingle, physically meet others, professionally socialize, even if it is just a few select times a year. Potential clients

will remember your face and name if they've seen you in person, shaken your hand, and had a conversation—short or long—with you. Times are changing and interaction can occur between two people who will never meet in person, but it's still important to differentiate yourself through good old-fashioned human interaction. Don't let online interaction replace face-to-face interaction.

- 6) Repackage your products and services with offers to act. This goes along with differentiating really, but sometimes you've got to give that tired old dog a new look. Find simple ways to relaunch yourself, your people, your products, your services, your packaging, to give yourself a new start in your market. You don't need to start from scratch, look for innovative ways to repackage, reprice, redeliver, re-guarantee, and re-communicate about what you do. Make them an offer they can't refuse, and make it so bold they must rehear you.

This is so true. Give your blog a face-lift. Create some excitement about a change in your services or products. Let your clients know if you are switching over to a virtual law office or offering unbundled legal services or revamping your pricing from billable hour to value pricing. Try to attract your market in a novel and exciting way. It will not only invigorate your potential client base, but it will also invigorate you. Practicing in the same rut only gets you deeper into the ground. When you eventually try to step out, you will feel like a Neanderthal and overwhelmed at the changes. Step out of your comfort zone and see which strategies work for you. Look at change as an opportunity, rather than a drag and one more thing to add to the to-do list.

- 7) Fix the marketing gaps. In every way, shape, and form that your business comes into contact with your prospects and customers, it is performing a market-

ing function—good or bad. You must look at all of your customer touch points and turn them into positive, brand-building opportunities. Tear down the lead generations touches, sales touches, service touches, delivery touches, follow-up touches, transaction touches, and billing touches and make sure that every single one of them is performing a killer marketing function for your business.

Every word you write, every syllable you utter, and every piece of paper with your name on it is a touch point with your brand and a business opportunity. You just have to realize it. Once you do, you will see all of the unconscious marketing opportunities you have available to you. As you begin to understand the reach of your touch points, you can try new strategies, including using social media such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube, if you haven't already done so. Remember to be genuine when using these mediums—write about what interests you, what drives you, or what you are passionate about. Don't fake it, because readers will notice. Offer useful information, rather than simply trying to ineffectively sell your practice. If you establish yourself as an expert through thoughtful, genuine, and useful posts, links, and tweets, people will trust you and want to hire you.

Now is the time to take inventory of all your touch points with clients and fellow attorneys. You will be astonished by how many marketing opportunities you may be missing or using incorrectly. When used correctly, your touch points can help fill the client pipeline—especially when times are tough.



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