

Grow Your Practice Series:

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101 Ways to Effectively Market Your Law Firm

No. 19: Radio Can Be an Effective Advertising Medium, but a Tricky One as Well!

Radio is an advertising medium that many attorneys use to promote their practices. Radio has many upsides, including that it is affordable and it reaches clearly defined markets. There is, however, a key downside!

Since **KDKA** in Pittsburgh first began commercial radio broadcasts in 1920, radio has grown every year since. There are more stations than ever before, and more listeners and advertisers than ever before. Many businesses, as well as professional service providers such as law firms, have found radio advertising to be both affordable and effective. In fact, many businesses use radio as their sole advertising outlet!

What You Need to Know about Radio: While radio is a proven medium, and an affordable advertising outlet, there are upsides and downsides you need to be aware of so you can intelligently determine if radio should be part of your overall marketing program. So here goes.



The Upsides of Radio: Radio advertising has been around for four score and seven years, and has grown every year because it offers many benefits.

- **Affordable:** In many markets, 30-second radio ads sell for as little as \$30 or \$40. In a major market, like New York or LA, they will run to \$100 or more, that is still very affordable compared to other media, such as newspapers.
- **Competition:** In virtually every metropolitan area in the country, there are two or three times as many radio stations as there are, for example, newspapers. Small to mid-size cities with just one newspaper will often have five to 10 radio stations. New York City has the largest number of daily newspapers for a metropolitan area (five), but there are over 50 radio stations serving the same market! That number of stations creates competition, and competition is good for advertisers and listeners. When there is just one newspaper in a metropolitan area, that paper can charge whatever it wants for advertising!
- **Regional:** Depending on the wattage of the station and the terrain, a radio ad typically covers a 30 to 50-mile radius. Unless you are based in Wyoming, and regularly have clients driving 150 miles to see you, that radius is just about right for law firm marketing.
- **Variety and Diversity:** Radio slices the market into neatly defined and easily digestible slices. There's news radio, talk radio, sports radio, dance radio, easy listening, Top 40, oldies and the newest format, "New Jack" radio. Each format reaches a different group of listeners. News radio, for example, appeals primarily to better educated, middle to upper income men. New Jack is designed to reach the 25 to 49 demographic. In smaller markets, a station will switch formats and reach different markets at different times of the day. **WXUR-FM** in Utica, New York, for example, runs "Imus in the Morning" from 6:00 to 10:00 a.m., then switches to an oldies format for the rest of the day.
- **Pick Your Demographic:** Each radio station can tell you exactly the demographics of their listeners, and it is third-party non-arbitrary data from the radio listenership survey company that serves that area. If you want to reach working people, advertise during drive-time. To reach stay-at-home moms, retirees and the unemployed, advertise during the day. The ad reps from your local stations will help you reach exactly the people who need to hear your message.



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- **Low Production Costs:** Not only is airtime affordable, so are production costs. Television has the highest production costs, followed by direct mail and then newspaper. Among all types of advertising, radio production is the least expensive. In fact, many stations will create your ad for you at NO charge!
- **Immediate:** Unlike many other media, you can get your message on radio in a few days.
- **Responsive and Adaptable:** And unlike print media, it is easy to change your ad. If your initial radio ad is not generating inquiries or generating the wrong inquiries, it can quickly and affordably be changed. Radio can also react to local events. For example, when there is a major disaster such as a fire, train wreck, tornado, flood or industrial accident, a personal injury attorney could quickly run radio ads referencing the recent event.

The Downsides of Radio: Radio does present three major challenges that have to be addressed if radio advertising is going to be both cost-effective and a lead generator.

Challenge No. 1: Radio is one dimensional. It is sound only. No pictures, no colors, no illustrations, no charts, no diagrams. Just sound. For the advertising that wants to show its products, radio comes up short. For a service provider, however, radio can be very effective. The trick is to break through the clutter of other ads and stand out among the other advertisers. Two ways to do this is to reference a recent event that catches the listener's ear. A second approach, which print advertising cannot do, is to have an attorney, or two or three attorneys at your firm, narrate the ad. It will be a voice or voices that listeners have not heard before, and it really personalizes your law firm, and that is very important and valuable. Another approach is to have a client who benefited from your law firm's services tell his or her story. There are lots of possibilities. Just make sure your ad does not sound like the ad for the local car dealer!



Challenge No. 2: And this is the really tricky one among the three challenges facing radio advertisers. How many times have you read an ad in a newspaper, and then torn out the ad so you could call that advertiser later? That is one of the single greatest benefits of print advertising, and it's the greatest challenge facing radio advertisers. Radio listeners rarely have a pen and paper sitting nearby when they hear your ad, especially if they are driving! Providing radio listeners with a way to contact you after they've heard your ad (what is called a "response mechanism") is a considerable—but by no means insurmountable—challenge!

For a retail store, the advertiser can give the store's address, the listener will visualize the location in his or her mind, so there is nothing to write down. For a service provider like a law firm, you probably want them to call you, so how do you give them a phone number they do NOT have to write down? For starters, do NOT ask them to "Call us today at 732-463-1705" because who can remember that number and write it down 10 minutes or maybe even 30 minutes later when they get to work, get home, or find a piece of paper?

If you are going to provide a phone number, and that is a logical and practical approach, make sure it is an easily remembered phone number. In the January **Attorney@law** we addressed vanity telephone numbers, like **800-HOLIDAY**, **800-CAR-RENT** and **877-2-SKYDIVE**, the vanity toll-free numbers of **Holiday Inns**, **National Car Rental** and a sky-diving school in Michigan. Creating and registering a vanity toll-free number for your law firm will produce an easy-to-remember telephone number for your listeners to call (and it will also have another benefit that you will read about in Challenge No. 3). Your toll-free vanity number can either utilize your firm name (**877-WILSON-1** for **Wilson, Johanssen and Schwartz**) or your location (**866-KCMO-LAW** for a Kansas City, Missouri law firm or **888-FLA-LAW-8** for a Florida-based law practice).

Three other approaches are to find a generic legal term for your toll-free number like **888-JUSTICE** or **866-LAWYERS**, or you can pay a premium number like **877-666-2000**. Instead of giving listeners a telephone number, give them an easy-to-remember website to visit. Set up a separate website with an easy-to-remember domain, such as **www.wilsonlaw.com**, **www.kcmoattorneys.com** or **www.floridalaw.com** and use it as your radio ad's response mechanism.

Challenge No. 3: You need to be able to 100% track the responses your radio ads are producing, especially if you decide to advertise on different radio stations, or you are also advertising via other media such as the **Yellow Pages** and newspaper. That means you want each radio station on which you advertise to have its own unique response mechanism.

If you decide to go with a toll-free vanity number for your radio ads, make sure it is a unique number that appears nowhere else (not on your stationary and not in any other advertising). When you receive your toll-free bill, it will show exactly how many calls came into that unique number, when they called, and the length of each call. If you set up a separate website to snag leads from your advertising, your hosting company can provide details reports on how many visitors that site had, when they visited, how long they stayed, and how many pages they viewed.

It takes time and money to put these mechanisms in place, but they produce a treasure trove of invaluable intelligence. For example, if you are running on two radio stations, you will know exactly how many inquiries each station produced. Look at the days the calls came in. If you are running a Monday-through-Friday rotation, and most of the calls are coming in on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, drop the Thursday ads and run more ads on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

The Bottom Line: Radio can be an affordable and effective advertising outlet that will generate inquiries that will turn into new clients. But before you try radio, or any other medium, make sure you have a non-arbitrary and trustworthy mechanism in place to accurately track exactly how many inquiries each advertising outlet is producing.

Managing Your Practice: Referrals from Former Clients Are Great! How Do You Assist the Process to Make Them Happen?

There is no better source of new clients than referrals from former or current clients. This is not, however, a passive process. There are things you can do to make it easier for your current and former clients to refer friends, relatives, neighbors and associates to you.

Few things are more satisfying than getting a call from a prospective new client who was referred to you by a former client. These are almost always the easier prospects to turn into new clients because they do not shop around, and they do not ask for references.

Most attorneys and law firm marketers, however, think of word-of-mouth as a passive activity. You just work hard serving your clients the best you can, and as you build up a base of satisfied clients, at some point in the future you start to receive referrals from those former clients. And that is all true, but there are things a law firm can do—and do very affordably—that will increase and accelerate the client referral process.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind: The key element in generating more referrals from your current and former clients is to get in front of them on a regular basis so they think of you whenever they get into a conversation with anyone about legal services. They BOTH think of your practice AND they have your name, address, telephone and website near at hand.

The worst of all worlds is when a former client gets into a conversation with a neighbor, acquaintance, co-worker or even a total stranger, and that former client wants to recommend you, but he or she cannot remember your name. Or he remembers your name, but cannot recall the name of your law firm! This happens every day, but you never hear about it! Here is what any law firm can do to make sure that former clients have your name and contact information close at hand.

- **Send Christmas or Holiday Cards:** It is very affordable, and also very friendly and personable, to send every former client a year end holiday card. If you live in a largely Christian area, then a Christmas card is appropriate. If your clientele are of mixed faiths, then a more generic Happy Holidays card is fine. Every client who receives and opens the card thinks about you one more time.
- **Send a New Years Card:** An alternative to sending a Christmas or holiday card (that may get lost among the many cards some people receive at year end), wait until the first week of January and send a New Years card. There are many attractive New Years cards that are also calendars. If your former client sticks the calendar on her refrigerator at home or on his bulletin board at work, you just put your law firm's name in front of that client for an entire year.
- **Send Birthday Cards:** Many International House of Pancakes restaurants offer a free dinner on a person's birthday. Many stores actually collect the names and birth dates of their customers, and once a month they send out birthday cards. Your clients will be flattered that you (1.) know it's their birthday, (2.) remembered their birthdays and (3.) took the time and effort to send them a card.
- **Send Out Notices to Your Clients:** Look for reasons to put your name and contact information in front of former clients. For example, a new attorney joins the firm. Make up a wedding invitation-type notice, and mail it out to your client base. One of your partners or associates is speaking at a conference or similar event. Print up an announcement and mail it out to your client base. Any event at your firm, from moving to new offices or opening a new office to putting up a website or updating your current website, is sufficient reason to let your client base know, and by so doing put your name, capabilities and contact information in front of them one more time in a friendly and professional manner.

End Game: Sending out two or three items a year to a former client—maybe a New Years card and calendar in January, birthday greetings in May, and/or an announcement of the addition of a new attorney to your staff in August—has no downside and only benefits, and it's dirt cheap!



Toward Fairer, Larger Settlements: How to Get Immediate Cash for Your Client While You Prosecute the Case

Many attorneys are not aware of the process involved in getting a cash advance for a client. Fortunately, it is not very complicated, and is a minimal interruption of the practice of law!

The process begins one of several ways:

- The client calls **LawMax** directly at **866-LAWMAX-8** (877-592-6298).
- The client applies on-line at www.fundmycase.com.
- The client's attorney (or someone at the client's law firm) applies on the client's behalf by calling **LawMax** at **866-LAWMAX-8**.
- Someone at the client's law firm visits the Attorney section at www.fundmycase.com and submits the case to LawMax.
- The attorney has the client complete a Client Questionnaire (if you do not have this form, we will e-mail you an Adobe file), and the attorney faxes the completed form to **LawMax**.



Once **LawMax** has reviewed the information provided through one of these options, **LawMax** contacts the attorney to request a copy of the client's file. The underwriting department at **LawMax** needs to review all documents pertinent to the case—the original complaint and all subsequent filings, as well as all support documents such as police reports and medical records. These documents can be provided in three formats:

- The attorney can make copies, and mail or ship them to **LawMax**. These documents are digitized, the originals are shredded, and the digitized files are kept on secure servers.
- The attorney can fax the documents to **LawMax**. The faxed documents are not printed out as hard copies, but automatically digitized by **LawMax**.
- The attorney can digitize all the documents (if they have not already been digitized) and e-mail the files to **LawMax**.

Two **LawMax** underwriters independently review the request for funding. One of the underwriters (who are attorneys themselves) calls the attorney to briefly discuss the case and possibly ask questions about the case to gain a better understanding.

Once the funding request is approved, a Claim Investment Agreement is sent to the plaintiff's attorney since we assume the client will want his or her attorney to review the agreement. The client signs the agreement and the attorney acknowledges the agreement.

As soon as **LawMax** receives the executed agreement, the advance goes out immediately either in the form of a check or via wire transfer to the client's bank account.

Total Attorney Involvement: For most attorneys, helping a client receive an advance against his or her claim involves having a copy made of the client's file and spending a few minutes on the phone with a **LawMax** underwriter!

Disclaimer: The Marketing Advice We Offer May NOT Be Applicable in Your State!

We try to provide practical marketing advice as part of this e-letter, but please be aware that everything we recommend may not be permissible in every state. Each state Bar Association has slightly different rulings on what is and is not ethical for an attorney to do in terms of advertising and promotion, and each state has different laws covering exactly how attorneys can promote their practices. We recommend that you make sure what we promote in **Attorney@law** is both ethical and legal in the jurisdictions in which you practice.