



THE 2011 TALI MARKETING TIPS FOR MEMBERS ONLY

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The concept of advertising is to attract more business, plain and simple. You have to stick out from your competitors. This document is intended to assist our TALI members in developing business, projecting a professional image and surviving in a competitive business climate.

One of the main differences between successful businesses and those that fail is marketing and advertising. You have to “brand” your name in the market place. If you intend to obtain business solely through word of mouth, you most likely will fail. Word of mouth helps promote business *after* you have provided a professional work product and your client tells others with a similar need. Branding your business requires your company name to be consistently and repetitively brought to the attention of your potential client. Companies like McDonalds and Coca-Cola are successful because they continuously advertise and keep their name fresh in the minds of consumers. There are many ways to advertise and market without costing a lot of money.

So how do you get the work initially? If you don't have a well defined niche such as insurance investigations, nursing home abuse cases or something similar, you have to develop your market. Let's say you want to market to lawyers so how would you go about doing this?

- Local Meetings: Attorneys, like most professions that are licensed, have to obtain continuing education to keep their license current. There are bar associations in most geographic areas such as the Dallas Bar Association. Make contact with them and determine when and where they hold their monthly meetings. Vendors are allowed to participate for a small fee and it allows you the opportunity to get face-to-face with attorneys.
- Bar Association Websites: Contact the local bar association and determine how much they charge to put a business card or your logo that links to your website on their site.
- Bar Membership Books: Most bar associations publish a listing of the attorneys that belong to their association. Check to see how much an advertisement in their book will cost and if you can get a current copy. This not only provides a list of the attorneys but their specialization so you know if they do criminal work, plaintiff, insurance defense, etc and this allows you to custom your advertising to them.
- Bar Newsletters: Check to see if they have a newsletter and the cost to advertise. Additionally, you may volunteer to write a short article that gets your name and expertise in front of the members.
- Bar Conventions and Seminars: Determine when and where they hold their meetings and how much it costs to advertise and attend. This gives you a great opportunity to speak with attorneys one-on-one.

*Remember that often times the paralegals that work for the attorneys are the ones that actually make the assignments to private investigators. Paralegals have their own

associations and the same tips listed above work for paralegals as well. This also works for other industries such as insurance claims adjusters.

Taking a step back, setting up your basic business documents is something not to be taken lightly. Your business cards, letterhead and brochures make a statement about you and your company. They should project an image of success and professionalism. They should also project a business atmosphere and not a “mom and pop” operation.

- Business Cards and Letterhead: Presentation is extremely important in anything that represents your company. Choosing a generic, plain card just doesn't grab anyone's attention and certainly will not be remembered. Consider choosing a pastel color for the paper like green, yellow, red or blue. They have to be pastel because they are still light enough that the writing can be easily read. By choosing a color like this, your clients know exactly what it is when they see it. Secondly, when a stack of mail is on their desk, they can pick your card and letterhead out of the stack. The color acts as a magnet for their eyes to attract to and isn't just another piece of paper. Should you select to go with a basic white, utilize color logos to help brand your name.
- Brochure: I have heard many PI's say that they don't have a brochure because things keep changing and they would have to re-print all the time. Instead, they use regular legal size paper and present this as their marketing material. You may choose to use both. Brochures should not be handed out to just anybody but should be presented to those that truly represent a potential client. A brochure should contain information that about the type of services you offer, your experience and membership in professional associations. The size of brochures should also be considered. Typically there are the 8 ½ x 11 inch brochures and the smaller envelope size that are designed for easier and cheaper mailing.
- Logo: A logo is another way to brand your company name and image. Unfortunately many PI's turn to the basic magnifying glass, Sherlock Holmes profile and similar worn out images. If you can afford it, hire a professional to come up with a professional looking logo that you can use on your business cards, letterhead, brochure, website, advertisements and other related uses. The typical cost for a professional design is \$150 - \$500 but is well worth it considering it imprints your name and image on the minds of your potential clients.
- Website: In this day and age, if you don't have a website, you are completely out of the marketing arena. The first think you should do is to obtain your domain name (internet address) through a company like Network Solutions or GoDaddy. On their sites you can do a search to see if the name is available such as www.yourcompanyname.com. If it is, pay the small fee to obtain and hold this for your company. Network Solutions and thousands of other companies offer website templates where you simply put your information into the pre-set fields and you have a website! You may however, choose to hire someone to

professionally design your website and this typically ranges from \$250-\$1500. Again, this must demonstrate a professional business image that others would want to do business with and it represents you. Once you have your domain and website, remember that most people who go to websites prefer more graphics and less text. Do not be too wordy on your website as people simply will not read it. Your intent is to get them to email or call you regarding the services you offer so make it attractive and easy to use.

- Newsletter: Newsletters are a great way to market your company and services in a subtle method and can be both mailed out, posted on your website and emailed to clients. People love to hear about private investigators and find this industry interesting. Everyone likes to hear a PI's war-stories, and of course, you leave out identifying information and make it somewhat generic. You should also try to include a "Fun Facts" column that has statistics and interesting short facts. Most people that read the newsletter will only read something that is a couple of paragraphs long and nothing that is more than a couple of pages in length. They are busy and just don't have the time for anything much longer.

A newsletter should be a consistent product that is produced every month or every quarter so that clients and potential clients start to look forward to it. It is important that you develop one that is sent often enough to keep your name in front of them, while at the same time, not being too frequent. Cost is a factor as well, and every time you print newsletters and mail them, it cost money in addition to your time. You may therefore choose just to have an on-line newsletter. In addition to mailing newsletters to your current clients, you should add potential clients to your mailing list. This will help to create potential business through name recognition.

Other potential methods of advertising include:

- Local newspapers. Although this definitely works, it can be very expensive. To place a business card advertisement in San Antonio, Dallas, Houston or a similar market, you will pay \$1,200-\$2,800 per week. The way around this is to put a small personal advertisement in the classified under "personals." You should also contact the editor and see if they run an article on you and your company. Remember, newspapers need stories of interest so you may be able to tie into a story line such as Valentine's Day.
- Business Journals. In most areas, there is a journal similar to the San Antonio Business Journal. You can place a business card size advertisement in these for \$50-\$75 per week.
- University & College Newspapers. If you are near any colleges or universities, try advertising in their newspapers. Parents often read these.

- Military Base Newspapers. In many areas, there are military bases. In San Antonio, for instance, we have five bases. Each have their own newspaper. A typical cost for placing a business card advertisement is \$10-30 per week.
- Free newspapers. Many areas have something similar to the Northside Recorder, Northwest Recorder or some other name for a free newspaper. Many of these are thrown on residential yards and placed in stands at stores. A lot of people read these and the cost to place a business card size advertisement runs from \$30-50 per week.

Just because the media says that it will cost so much to place a "business card" advertisement, it doesn't mean that you have to use your business card. It simply means that the size of the advertisement will be the size of a business card. Target your advertisement to the particular market that you are advertising to. For instance, if you are placing in advertisement in one of the free newspapers, you probably will be seeking domestic related cases. If placing an advertisement in a business journal, you will probably want to target corporate investigations.

The important thing is to advertise on a regular basis. That doesn't necessarily mean every week, every two weeks or once a month. What it does mean is that you should keep your name out there on a regular basis.

Associations and Seminars:

- One of the often over-looked ways to obtain more business is through associations such as TALI. Other private investigators often refer cases to other PI's in different geographic locations. It is important to make sure that your free membership listing is up to date. In addition, associations have conferences throughout the year where you can attend and get to know other investigators. TALI offers two conferences a year and we also have regional meetings in different parts of the state each month. Take advantage of this tremendous opportunity!
- Articles – One of the best ways to get your name known is to write articles for trade publications and newsletters. Every publication needs good articles to fill their publication and it is a wonderful way to demonstrate your expertise in a certain area.
- Speaking – If you are good at speaking in front of large groups, consider being a presenter at a conference to help draw attention to your services and develop more clients.
- On-line groups are designed to allow association members post messages, ask questions and provide information to other members. Become an active participant in on-line discussions to learn, provide information and become more acquainted with other members.

- Designations – Being a part of a trade association such as TALI immediately signifies to your potential clients that you are integrated into the industry and are kept up to date with legislation and current trends that can affect the PI profession. In addition, TALI have other designations that you may qualify for that shows potential clients your additional expertise. The Texas Certified Investigator (TCI) is the premier designation for TALI and should be considered as an additional opportunity to advertise your expertise.

Besides talking to trade associations, there are a number of other places that you can give seminars that include:

- School District Community Education classes are a good source for advertising. This is a good source for spreading your name and the mail-out announcing the classes being offered are sent throughout the city and it doesn't cost you a penny. You get to give an hour long seminar to approximately 40 people who now know you and can spread your name. The school district pays an instructor about \$20 per class, but the seminars are primarily for the free advertising and word of mouth.
- Summer School programs through elementary, junior high and high schools are another good source of gaining speaking experience as well as marketing yourself. Some districts have PI's teach elementary and junior high age students for three hours a day during a week session in the summer. You teach them some hands on stuff like how to take fingerprints, how to handle a crime scene and similar things. The kids love it, I you get introduced to their parents for future marketing and the districts often pay as much as \$500 per week.
- Clubs that hold monthly meetings over lunch and are always needing someone to speak. These include the Rotary Club, the Kiwanis Clubs, the Optimist Clubs and Chamber of Commerce groups. Each of these has business people as members and that is the perfect market to get in front of and market.
- Colleges and Universities are another good source of speaking engagements. If they have a criminal justice, business, law degree program or something similar, these should be targeted. Many of these will be good contacts and/or clients once they graduate.

There are areas of marketing that is considered off the beaten path, but is still good sources for marketing. Some of these include:

- Gyms. There are a lot of business people working out a gyms these days. Most of these gyms have a bulletin board and there are now companies that specialize in putting advertising around the bulletin boards.
- Church Bulletins. With the increase in sexual improprieties surrounding churches, this is a good source. In addition, just because someone goes to

- church doesn't mean they don't have challenges in their life that they may need an investigator for.
- Shepherd's Guide. This is a publication in many areas that is designed as a yellow page directory for those who profess a belief in God. Others of like faith can find other businesses with like beliefs.
 - Telephone Book. Advertising in the telephone book outside of the normal listing can cost thousands of dollars. Most who have ever tried it say it is a waste of money. Secondly, if you call most of those with large advertisements, you will probably find that their telephones are not even being answered.
 - Golf - This is the perfect tool for marketing. You get the client away from the telephones and in a better mood because they are doing something besides working. Half the battle in getting a client is getting them to like you as a person. By the end of a round of golf, they will either like you or run from you.
 - Tickets - You can buy tickets to sporting events from time to time and send them to some of my better clients as a thank-you.
 - Thanksgiving/Christmas Gifts - During the holidays, you can get nicely decorated buckets of popcorn, fruit, candy and the like and deliver them to clients.
 - Calendars - These are a good method of keeping your name in front of the client year round because your name is on them and sitting on their desk.
 - Pens - Everyone loses pens and likes to get new ones. You can deliver these to clients, and eventually they will lose them and hopefully find their way into someone else's hands that might need me!
 - Notepad -. These are common as a way of marketing. You may have to be careful with a lot of these types of things because if they use them on a daily basis, they get where they don't pay attention to the name and only use them for writing on or with.
 - Baseball hats - Consider having hats made with your company name on them and give them to clients. It is a great way to advertise to others who see the hat as well.

Internet Marketing: In addition to having your company website, you need to promote your site in the internet search engines. There are free programs you can download from the internet that upload your information and listing to the search engines. However, larger sites like Yahoo and Google require you to go into the marketing area of their sites to manually enter and submit the information to get listed in their search engines. There are also companies that specialize in getting your listing placed higher in the search engines. Typically this is done either by "clicks" or by search engine optimization (SEO). If you choose the click method, you agree to spend a designated amount of money per month and they agree to drive a enough traffic to your site that clicks on your pages. However, each page they click

on within your website counts as a click. The search engine optimization is similar as you designate how many potential new clients you want each month and they guarantee to keep you at the top of the search engines to insure you get that amount of potential clients.

In addition to search engine placements, there are hundreds of websites where you can place a listing free of charge to promote your website. This of course takes your time but does not cost anything.

Television and Radio Advertising: These do not seem to be the best method of advertising for our type of profession. It is expensive and requires a great deal of capital to keep an advertising campaign going. You may notice that you don't see or hear these types of advertisements and this is primarily because they do not appear to be effective for PI's.