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Hugh Duffy • Feb. 18, 2009

When it comes to marketing during busy season, the common complaint amongst smaller firms is “I don’t have time to market during tax season.”

During crunch time in a small practice, tax and accounting professionals find themselves challenged with serving the needs of existing clients, managing the office operationally, encouraging clients to get their work in early, managing staff, meeting with clients, and reviewing the quality of the work. As a result, generating leads using marketing becomes one more item on the endless “to do” list. That’s one way of thinking about marketing.

For those practitioners who want to continuously improve the quality of their clientele and improve the practice, marketing is and must become a habitual activity in the practice. Otherwise, the practitioner will find himself/herself constantly applying grease to the squeaky wheel in a knee jerk, reactive mode.

Here are five proven marketing tips that require very little lead-time to implement:

1. Grass roots marketing — Shotgun your message locally.

Make every effort possible to get your message out right now. While your tactics may vary depending on the size of your practice, grass roots marketing efforts include signage, sandwich boards, local bulletin boards, e-mail networks, craigslist postings, car signage, incenting staff members to bring in clients, and paying someone to hold a sign in front of your office. Yes, I understand that some

of these tactics may make you cringe, but rationalize this by telling yourself

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3. Develop a top 20 hit list — Over the past year or so, you probably met with tons of prospects for your firm services. Develop a list of the 20 best prospects who considered your services over the past year. Personally reach out to them and persuade them to reconsider your firm. Send them a letter and then an e-mail, and make a phone call to ask to meet briefly for coffee. Seek to close a couple of these over the next 60 days.

4. Take full advantage of website marketing — The Internet is a wonderful opportunity to market your firm services to total strangers and educate your existing clients about the range of services you provide. If you have a website that is well constructed so it can be found on the search engines (e.g., search engine optimized), this is a wonderful way to attract new business.

5. E-mail newsletter — To keep your firm top-of-mind during tax season and draw in some of your fence sitters, I strongly recommend sending out an e-mail newsletter (e-newsletter) that drives readers to your website. With integrated e-newsletter solutions that leading website providers offer, this can be completed in less than 15 to 20 minutes each month.

Marketing and improving the quality of your practice should be job one during busy season. Incorporate these five proven tips into your marketing plans, and you will be pleasantly surprised.

*Hugh Duffy is co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer for **Build Your Firm** (www.buildyourfirm.com),*

a leading practice development firm dedicated to the accounting industry and profession. Build Your Firm works with small accounting firms providing accounting

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