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Marketing is still a fairly new concept for firms. In the minds of most, marketing is a task of overwhelming proportions. However, it doesn't have to be. Like anything else,

it will take time to get up the marketing learning curve, but no one says you can't

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program off the ground. This is nothing major ... and each initiative can happen in good time.

Launching Your Marketing Program

You know you want to move forward with marketing efforts. But like many firm leaders, you don't know where to start. Make it easy on yourself (and your staff) by focusing on a few activities and slowly growing your program as you become more comfortable. Rest assured that you will eventually fall into your marketing groove. Then, before you know it ... you've become a marketing sage.

Identify a Marketing Gatekeeper

You've got a lot to do, so if you can hand over marketing tasks to a reliable staff member, do it. This person will oversee all marketing initiatives and ensure that the program stays running and on course. Your gatekeeper will also keep you informed of campaigns and seek your advice on messaging when needed. But ultimately, he or she will be responsible for broad program operation. Look around your office for your gatekeeper. You may be surprised at the creative folks that will want to take this on.

Start Your Plan

A marketing plan provides a blueprint of what tasks need to be accomplished and the proper timeframe for each, keeping you on track and your marketing goals realistic. The plan doesn't have to be comprehensive; you just have to get something down on paper. For example, create a spreadsheet divided into quarters (Q1-Q4), and then begin to populate the plan with marketing initiatives you would like to accomplish. Start slowly ... perhaps one campaign per quarter. Over time, and as you add initiatives, you will start to see an organized plan come together.

Build an Arsenal of Marketing Collateral

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Launch that First Campaign

Don't be scared of hitting the ground running with a few small marketing campaigns. As long as you research your audience and create the right message, there is little that can go wrong. Just ask a few simple questions up front: Who is my audience? Am I communicating to clients or prospects? Am I targeting a specific niche (e.g., dentists)? Once you have all this, create your communication and hit Send!

Final Thoughts

These steps represent the big rocks of a sound marketing program. Starting with a few manageable tasks helps ease you into marketing and sets the stage for a full program roll out down the road.

Approach marketing slowly to mitigate frustration for both you and your staff. Learning how to run a marketing program by taking small steps allows everyone ample time to absorb new information and processes. It's also much easier to identify and correct issues when your program is small and confined, opposed to launching a full-scale plan from the get-go. Most importantly, you are far less likely to abandon marketing efforts altogether if you take it slowly. When people feel overwhelmed, it's human nature to retreat and avoid. Don't let that happen. Roll out your program in increments and learn at a pace that is comfortable. You'll see ... you'll move from "walk" to "run" mode in no time.

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