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## The holidays offer marketing options

**T**he holidays are a challenging time for lawyers and law firms when it comes to marketing. We are met with the following dilemma — do our efforts at marketing impact clients and potential clients, who are inundated by other lawyers and law firms at this time of the year?

From my experience, the holidays provide marketing opportunities not found at other times of the year. Holidays are all about keeping in contact with those who can help us with our work and business. However, it takes an extra effort to take full advantage of those opportunities by making our contacts personalized and meaningful.

The first step in making your holiday season a marketing success is to put together a list of those you would like to contact over the holidays. The holidays provide you with an opportunity and excuse to reach out to those with whom you have fallen out of touch and to meet others who you think might need your legal services and who could help you further your career. Review your client and contact lists and find those who might be receptive to your communications at this busy time of year.

**Holiday cards.** Many firms have now gone to electronic cards, and although it is beneficial to reach out in any way possible to clients and potential clients, I find the electronic cards that I receive often go unopened. If you have the

resources, nothing beats the impact of a high-quality, paper holiday card with a personal note. Make sure that you send your holiday cards as early as possible in the season. That way, your card will be received before your clients are overrun with other holiday greetings. If you must send an e-mail as your holiday communication, try to personalize it in some way so that your contact will actually open and read it.

**Holiday gifts for clients.** Like holiday cards, the more personalized you can make your holiday gifts, the better. Try to tailor your holiday gifts to your clients' interests and hobbies and give a gift that will last the entire year. For instance, giving a kitchen gadget to someone who enjoys cooking is more thoughtful and has a more long-lasting impact than sending a generic gift of cookies or popcorn. Sending personal gifts to your top 10 clients makes business sense only if those gifts will stand out among all of the others they are likely receiving.

**Holiday parties.** Networking opportunities are plentiful at this

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time of year. Almost every trade and bar association has holiday events, many of which are open to the public. Target those events with attendees who could really end up being clients or referral sources. Plan on taking a current client to the event to facilitate meeting other people in that client's industry. If you are attending alone, arrive at the event early in order to best facilitate meeting others. Also, consider having your own holiday party for your own clients and tell them to bring other colleagues who might also retain you. Introduce your clients to others at the event who have common interests and professions. Having an event at

your home helps to personalize your relationships with clients. If you cannot hold your own holiday event, try to plan to entertain clients individually, either at the end of the year or as a celebration of the new year in January, when most business people are not quite as busy. Ask your clients what makes sense for them in terms of timing and location in order to ensure that your celebration will be well-attended.

**Follow up.** After all of these contacts through cards and gifts and events, the most important next step is to follow up at the conclusion of the holiday season. You can do this in a way that feels comfortable to you: Send an article about a relevant area of law; provide an invitation to a seminar or training that might be useful; or make a valuable introduction. As an employment lawyer, I find that many of my clients have issues that arise at this time of year involving terminations and hiring. I find that spending time with clients and potential clients and learning their business allows me the opportunity to help when needed, and ultimately, to make the all-important request for legal business.

The holidays are a natural time to make contact and express appreciation to those who help make you a successful lawyer. Make sure that your efforts at this time of year are focused and targeted and that you use your contacts made now to bolster your business in 2013.