

MANAGEMENT

Make This Time a Gift

By Jamie K. Mulholland

The partner in question was insanely busy. He was known to work long and odd hours, roaming the hallways of the firm as he dictated with one of two things on his feet: his signature cowboy boots or his socks. Yet, amidst the busy-ness, he asked me for a meeting. “I cannot even think about marketing right now,” he said. “What I want to talk about is marketing when all this craziness is over.”

These are crazy days, that is for sure. Law firms are operating on an entirely new and unfamiliar platform, with attorneys and staff working independently and remotely. For the time being, there is no popping in to another office to ask a simple question. There is only email, and texting, and Zoom. (Oh, my.)

Some firms are trying to stay on top of matters that did not come to a halt despite court shutdowns, working to keep things moving while keeping clients informed and reassured. Others are experiencing more of a quiet time. “The phone,” lamented one attorney to me recently, “even forwarded, is just not ringing.”

Regardless of where you are on the busy scale, one thing is certain: we cannot change what is happening now. But, like my cowboy boot-clad counsel above, we *can* plan for when it is behind us. (Especially now, as we start to see light at the end of the Stay-at-Home tunnel.) Do not look at these circumstances as a burden. As the expression goes, “Today is a gift; that is why it is called ‘the present.’”

Why not commit to just a few small tasks with the time you have left in a place where you are safe from people popping in (save those people who call you mom or dad)? A place where you have the privacy to do a little brainstorming on “you.” What you can accomplish now will pay dividends in the future. Here are a few key areas you can think about:

- **Your profile:** When was the last time you read it? Probably a year or more, right? Pop on the firm website, print it out, mark it up, add to it. You might even choose to rewrite it completely using verbiage you think a potential client would like to see to be moved to make the choice to reach out to you.
- **Your publications:** Certainly, you have had an idea or two for an article, right? You have had no time to pursue it. But you *do* have time for one thought. Open a Word document. Type a working title for one of those ideas and a sentence or two to back it up. Then close out

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the doc and come back tomorrow. I find that, even though I may write just three or four sentences on an idea, if I come back to build on it each day, these pieces often seem to write themselves within a week.

Why not commit to just a few small tasks with the time you have left in a place where you are safe from people popping in (save those people who call you mom or dad)?

- **Your events:** Have you thought about putting together a CLE or other educational event? Yes, it may be some time before in-person educational events occur as we once knew, but for now, try and flesh out just one of your ideas. As with the article idea above, give it a fun title and a few sentences on what you would cover. As Aristotle (and Mary Poppins) once said, “Well begun is half done.”

- **Your network:** Would such an event be even more impactful if you brought in some like minds (or potential referral sources) to present alongside you? Why not take the event you thought about above and reformat it as a panel? Make a list of potential participants and reach out to them. (Look what you just did there: two birds, one CLE.)
- **Your online presence:** When was the last time you reviewed your LinkedIn profile? How about other social media (Twitter, etc.)? If you do not have accounts established, *and it is right for your practice*, go ahead and set them up. Think about content that lends itself to what you do and a schedule that is sustainable for you to follow. If nothing else, you can use these outlets to support firm messaging through reposts and retweets.
- **Your web content:** Does your firm host a blog? No matter who is in charge of curating the content, know that you can always add your own. Your perspective is personal and valuable.
- **Your big picture (on the little screen):** Video is just so huge for law firms right now. Done well, it can showcase firm capabilities and your philosophy and help you to stand out. What are your ideas for videos for your firm?
- **[Your idea here.]** I often find that every attorney has, in the back of their mind, a fantastic marketing idea they simply have never had the time to pur-

sue. Give yourself five minutes (go on, give yourself 10, you deserve it) to think about how to get it in motion. Momentum breeds momentum.

Can you accomplish everything above? Maybe, maybe not. But if you tackle even just one thing, you are moving in the right direction.

I should mention that there is another wonderful by-product to all this: taking time to look at the different elements of your brand and initiating the steps to enhance it can be so cathartic at a time like this. Look at that bio! Look at all you have accomplished. You are good at what you do, and your clients are lucky to have you. The very least you can do *for* you is promote what you *do*, so that more people can take advantage of that experience.

I was listening to a podcast the other day hosted by a woman who has toured the country as a public speaker for some 30 years. She shared that some stretches are so busy it is easier to combine multiple trips without stopping home in between. Someone recently, aghast at the thought of such a grind, asked her “How do you *feel* about all of this?” She replied, “You know what? I never asked myself!” laughing that if she did, she might end up focusing on the “crummy” aspects of it.

Indeed, there is a lot of crummy stuff we can dwell on right now. Choose not to do that. Choose to roll up your sleeves and think on what you can accomplish in the future.

Good luck. See you on the other side. ■