

MARKETING

Selling Your Tech

It's not just legal expertise your clients seek.

By Douglas Caddell

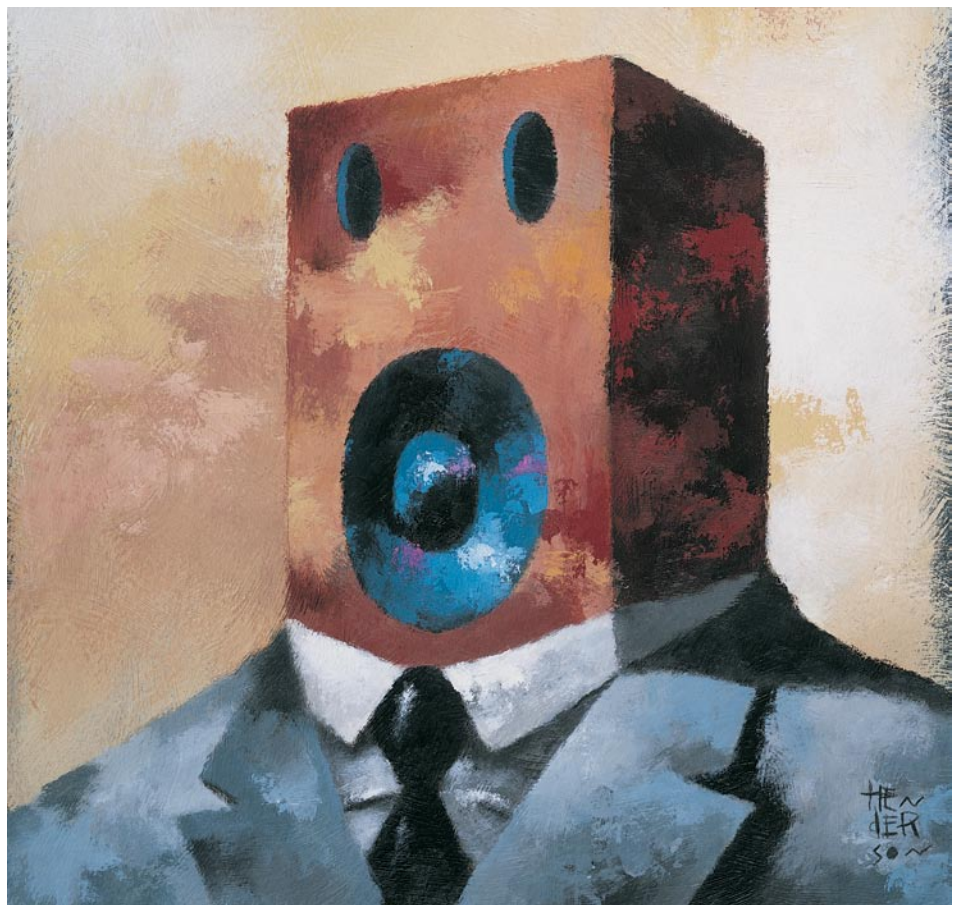
Over the years law firm IT has been described as an expense to be managed, an investment, and a competitive advantage. How your firm views technology is important, but how your clients view the use of IT by its law firms is what counts.

A number of years ago, as I sat on conference panels with corporate counsel, it became clear that law departments needed legal industry technology, but most were at the bottom of their company's IT food chain. Some firms understood this, and began to focus effort on IT that would help their clients, sometimes called "client-facing" IT.

While many firms said that they provided client-focused technology — extranets being just one example — only a few firms made a real difference to the ease in which a general counsel could run his or her law department; or helped improve the intimacy of the firm's relationship with that GC.

In the February issue of ALM's *Corporate Counsel* magazine, David Cambria, director of legal operations at the Chicago-based insurer Aon Corp., described what happened when his company prepared to reduce its outside counsel from 400 to 23 law firms.

*Douglas Caddell is chief information officer at Foley & Lardner, and a member of the LTN Editorial Advisory Board. He is based in Chicago.
E-mail: Dcaddell@foley.com.*



Cambria assumed that all the firms had experienced, capable lawyers. But "we wanted to take it to a higher level, and the most successful firms were the ones that told us how they'd help us do what we do better, with technology," he says.

Good technology truly can make a difference. At Foley & Lardner, we not only have been retained

because of our IT capabilities, but we have gained a larger percentage of our clients' work, as other counsel were let go because of inadequate client-focused IT.

For example, a few years ago, we were one of two finalists for significant work at K-Mart (Sears Holdings Corp.), and IT capability was one of the items specifically requested in the request for proposal. We were not only prepared to

list our capabilities in our response, we discussed IT for more than an hour with K-Mart counsel, as part of the vetting process — and then we demonstrated the live website that was fully operational if they chose us for this work.

The other finalist was a national boutique firm. While they had a basic extranet offering, they were not prepared to discuss IT in depth and did not demonstrate what they could accomplish via technology. Our IT expertise helped us to stand above this significant competitor and get the work.

Unfortunately, most firms and individual lawyers don't realize the power that technology brings to the marketing table. Too many firms still write off technology as an expense — and don't see investment in IT as part of revenue generation. Technology is part of the revenue cycle when it helps the selling process to gain new clients, or to retain existing clients.

I've heard firm managers say, "All the other firms have the same technology and we have extranets too. There is no advantage."

If there is no advantage then why do our clients literally say, "wow," when shown how our IT can help them run their law department and provide better service to their corporate business units?

General counsel are looking for ways to make their life easier. Start by talking with corporate counsel to find out what they are trying to accomplish and where they feel pain. Once you've accessed their agendas, you can determine what you have to offer — and align your capabilities with your (potential) client's business need. The important thing is to align what you are actually able to produce. Too many firms talk a good line in a presentation, without the ability to deliver.

For example, for one client, we built a web-based repository of real estate transaction documents, by jurisdiction. The documents, related checklists, and project plans are updated regularly and used to generate transaction documents and workflow. It is more than just a document store — it facilitates best practices and is a stealth way to employ knowledge management practices.

So how do you market technology?

1. *Demonstrate* — that your firm is tech savvy. If your firm is using technology in its marketing programs, it shows clients that you make use of IT beyond just sending them an invoice. Host webinars and podcasts, create electronic communications and

newsletters — your effective web presence shows your comfort with technology.

2. *Advertise* — If your firm believes that technology is important and you have a story to tell, then tell it. Clients care about technology, so tell them about it in your ad campaigns. One component of our print ads focuses on how our technology helps GCs. These ads show our technology, not our lawyers.

3. *Focus Your Efforts* — Until your lawyers are comfortable with your technology they will not be able to sell the benefit of using it to a client. Most attorneys need and welcome help. We created the position of technology consultant, and hired Charlotte Logullo to market and sell our client-oriented IT to our attorneys and directly to our clients. Note: The IT consultant is not there to train lawyers on IT, she is there to facilitate the use of IT by our clients, thereby creating a tighter bond with the firm.

4. *Develop* — technology products. Technology is often intangible and many people find it difficult to sell the intangible. For example, we developed a suite of web-based tools that we named Foley:ClientSuite, that could be modified or adjusted to address most clients' needs. Once our attorneys understood the process — and used the suite — they could articulate to clients how it worked, and actively market the suite as a valuable addition to their legal service.

5. *Sell* — IT in-house to your lawyers. Don't just look toward the firm's techie lawyers, look at business savvy lawyers as well. Remember, you are selling assistance with business problems and not technology.

6. *Obtain* — management's buy-in. Key management lawyers must not only support technology, they must believe that it plays a role in our competitive industry. This is getting easier to accomplish as outside counsel require their law firms to be IT capable. Management must reinforce to firm lawyers that IT matters.

7. *Concentrate* — on what works. Many

IT directors say, "But the clients don't use the extranets," or, "It was used for a few weeks and then nothing." My answer to that is that I don't care if an extranet goes unused. While I would prefer that our lawyers and clients use one if it makes sense to do so, I'm not worried about if an IT tool goes unused. If it helped convince the prospective client that our firm could provide them with effective comprehensive legal services, then the IT component did its job — helping to obtain a new client.

Don't look at the lack of continuing use of IT tools as a failure. Even those that are not used are often a success in more subtle ways. And the need for such tools comes and goes with the business need of the client.

8. *Seek* — awards. It is low cost marketing that clients notice.

9. *Involve* — the marketing department. Legal news is full of commentary about law firm marketing professionals not being "on speaking terms" with their technology department counterparts. I just don't understand this. As a CIO, your marketing department can be one of your greatest supporters — inside the firm and with your clients. IT and marketing departments have the same objective — to help make the firm more successful.

10. *Think* — beyond the historical uses of IT in a law firm. Get involved in the revenue side of the business. This doesn't mean that you have to charge for IT. Get IT involved on the client side.

If you want to ensure that success of your technology department, help to ensure the success of your firm and your clients. Become a part of business and revenue generation — develop effective client-facing IT and then tell the world. **LTN**

Reprinted with permission from the June 2007 edition of LAW TECHNOLOGY NEWS. © 2007 ALM Properties, Inc. All rights reserved. Further duplication without permission is prohibited. For information, contact 212-545-6111 or www.almreprints.com. #010-06-07-0002

TWO STEP[®]
SOFTWARE

General Inquiries: (781) 972-5200
Sales and Support: (800) 223-8900
Web: www.twostep.com
Email: info@twostep.com