

## How to raise practice profile as employment law specialists

By Linda Julian

### Publish in the industry press

- List the relevant publications.
- Research the editorial preferences:
  - length of articles, style (learned article/topical article/question and answer column/other)
  - preferred submission format (paper-based/electronic/word processing format)
  - is a photo required ?
  - publication deadlines
  - does this publication re-publish material previously published, or not ?
- Prepare your topical article - make sure there is a catchy title which will excite interest in the intended audience. The best titles are things like "Ten things every sacked employee should know", "Your rights on termination: the bottom line", "How to negotiate the best exit arrangements"
- Write your article focussing on the concerns of your target audience
- While you may choose to submit one article to several different publications, you should "customise" it each time to appeal to the key concerns of each different target audience - e.g. the HR managers will have slightly different perspectives from the commercial travellers association members.
- Circulate your article to editors wherever possible with a photo of the author or other interesting visual support such as photographs, chart, diagrams, or even cartoons.
- If you are using material from other sources, check that you have copyright clearances on all of the material you are submitting - including visual support.

- When published, copy the article and send it to your clients, prospective clients, key contacts in industry (even those who may have seen it their own publication - you don't know, they may have missed it !) barristers, prominent industry figures, small business owners, selected experts, and others.
- Again, circulate the published article within your own firm.
- Have copies of the article available at reception as reading matter for visiting clients and contacts.

### Publish in professional journals

- Write substantive articles for legal professional journals - this develops your profile within the profession.
- After publication, circulate copies of these articles from legal professional journals to your senior employee clients, HR manager clients, line managers, small business owners, and selected prospective clients: this raises your profile as an expert (evidenced by the imprimatur of professional publication) among your clients and prospective clients.
- Circulate copies of this published material to any barristers who may be useful referral sources or secondary referees for your skills.

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- Circulate copies of this published material to other advisors, influencers, and recommenders to your selected market segment. These might include private employment agents, active members of professional associations or industry groups, counsellors, medical practitioners, etcetera.
- Circulate the published article within your own firm: make sure your staff are fully aware of what you've said and where.
- Make copies of the article for the reception area.

### Speaking engagements

- List likely venues or speaking opportunities.
- Offer your services as an expert speaker or commentator to key conference organisers, professional bodies, special interest groups, industry and trade associations, and community groups.
- Always ensure you have appropriate presentation aids and handout materials for speaking engagements : overhead transparencies are the minimum standard these days - computer projection is far preferable in most circumstances. If a small venue can't provide these, insist on a flipchart and pre-make your presentation support materials.
- Make the conference paper you present the basis of your next article.

### Prepare checklists and "how tos"

- Clients and prospective clients will always value simple checklists to help them organise themselves, reduce risk and stress, and identify when your expertise may be required.
- Use "how tos" to show your clients how anxious you are to help them save money and make rational use of your services or expertise.
- Use catchy titles : for example, "Ten things to remember before you accept an offer", "Know your rights"
- Laminate the checklist if you want it to be kept
- Consider "wallet cards" with "Know your rights" type material - simply word process in small font, guillotine and laminate

### Increase substantive expertise

- Identify relevant education to increase knowledge, confidence, familiarity with broader issues connected to this area, and to create new networks.
- Single-unit or postgraduate diploma programmes: MGSM, AGSM, TAFE
- CLE events
- Industry conferences and seminars
- AIM events
- Free or low-cost educational programmes from AHRI and similar organisations

### Run seminars

- Offer free or paid (token fee only) registrations to substantive presentations on key issues.
- Attendees will value "informal workshop style" rather than formal lectures.
- Ensure you have appropriate handout materials and presentation support aids.
- Always evaluate attendees reactions or responses to a seminar: provide an evaluation sheet which encourages attendees for request further information or other follow-up.
- Make each seminar theme the subject of a further article.
- Use your seminars as a forum to introduce other industry experts to registrants - this way you can leverage off their industry profiles, as well.

### Targeted networking

- Join relevant associations and interest groups to increase contacts and profile.
- Consider further education as a networking opportunity.

### Become a key source of valuable information

- Collect press clippings, conference papers, industry publications, and other items of relevance to your subject area.
- Catalogue your collection.
- Make your resource library known and available to your key industry contacts, clients, and prospective clients.
- Make your colleagues within your firm and others in the profession aware of your library and offer appropriate access.

### Industry commentator

- Offer newflashes providing your commentary or assessment on recent developments in the field - focus on circulating these quickly after news of an event or a phenomenon comes to light.
- Ensure that you don't just re-tell the news, but rather analyse the implications and suggest appropriate responses or avenues for investigation.

### Target likely clients

- Initiate selling campaign.

### Assemble a handbook

- Collect all of your published articles and other materials into a simple handbook.
- Include useful tips and techniques.
- Use your handbook as an "giveaway" to clients and prospective clients.
- Make your handbook available through other key influencers and recommenders in your target market.

### Write a book

- This is probably the ultimate profile raising exercise ! It takes a huge time commitment, but little can match its effect if well promoted.

### Key opportunities :

- Change to PAYG system
- Trend to insource with GST
- Movement of contractors to payroll employees with combination of GST, PAYG, and tightened tax system
- Local IT industry
- Local graphic arts, advertising, direct marketing industry
- Local call centres
- Profile likely clients: determine best routes to access these
- Review current clients: what can they refer to you ?

### To do :

- Review document
- Select action items
- List relevant items
- Determine actions
- Develop timetable
- Measure progress against plan
- Evaluate outcomes

### About the author

Linda Julian is acknowledged as a leading authority on strategic practice development and how to win business for law firms. Since 1979, she has consulted with lawyers and other professionals throughout Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific, and Asia on a wide range of business acquisition, client retention, and strategic management issues.

Her book *The Passionate Professional: creating value, success, and prosperity* has sold in 13 countries and has received wide acclaim. Linda lectures in strategic management and marketing professional services at post-graduate level. She leads the small and highly specialised Julian Midwinter & Associates consulting practice.