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A NEWSLETTER PROVIDED BY THE LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS

THE TECHNOLOGY ROUNDUP

Gerry Morris, J.D.

Even in a Reduced Paper Office a Shredder is Essential Equipment

The subject of this month's article is a device that isn't really all that high tech. The reason I'm writing about it is because it works and works well. I'm talking about the piece of equipment that eats my junk mail, discarded drafts of documents, old credit cards, DVDs and CDs, paperclips and all. My topic is the Fellowes Power-shred SB-97C Shredder.



Shredders aren't as sexy to write about as high tech gadgets but when I find a piece of equipment that works as advertised and is priced reasonably I like to pass the information along. Even in my reduced paper office I still have a lot of waste paper to contend with. We print what we think are final copies of documents only to discover something that must be changed. I received documents from other sources that I review and decide not to keep or scan. I also receive a ton of junk mail every day just like everyone else. Regrettably the forests are going to be endangered for years to come.

All this paper has to go somewhere. The best way I've found to manage it is to have shredders in everyone's office or workstation that is an end recipient of the paper flow. We shred it, and dispose of it. This obviously isn't rocket science. The only challenge was to find shredders that are capable of handling the volume but don't cost an

See *Technology Roundup* on page 2

THE COACH'S CORNER

Debra Bruce, J.D.

Which Marketing Book Can Help You?

Many of my clients ask me to recommend books that can be good tools or reference materials for enhancing their law practice management skills. Today I'm sharing with you my reviews of three popular books that address business development for lawyers.



1. ***Rainmaking Made Simple: What Every Professional Must Know*** by Mark M. Maraia. Maraia writes in an easy to read style, and gives numerous real life examples of how attorneys have successfully implemented the techniques he recommends. Those anecdotes shift the conceptual into the concrete, a real strength of the book.

Maraia's book is ideal for attorneys who find marketing daunting, unpleasant or bothersome. He teaches the reader how to make marketing fun, or at least, in his words, "less torture." He helps lawyers find ways to market their law practice while doing things they already like doing. He teaches them how to become more effective at the marketing techniques they have already attempted, and encourages them to stretch a little into some new activities.

The Maraia Method® focuses on relationship development. Some other business development books say things like (and I'm quoting) "Develop a relationship as early as you can....This can start in modest ways, such as gathering information about the prospect and establishing a rapport during the selling process." Duh! But exactly *how* do you accomplish that? Maraia tells you. For example, in Chapter 18: *The Myth of Asking for the Business*, Maraia gives specific advice on how to build your prospect's trust through the kinds of questions

See *Coach's Corner* on page 3

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Tech Roundup continued from page 1

arm and leg.

The first couple of shredders I tried couldn't keep up the pace. I started with small shredders with capacity ratings of about 11 sheets at a time. These shredders overheated frequently causing them to shut down until they cooled. I eventually did a little more comparative shopping and purchased a Fellowes Powershred SB-97C. I then purchased another and another.

The 97C is a "confetti" shredder which means that it cross cuts the sheets into 5/32"x1 1/2" particles. This makes it extremely difficult for anyone to get any information from your discarded documents unless they really are serious about trying. It shreds up to 17 sheets of paper at a time and up to 204 sheets per minute. I've found this to be plenty of capacity for our volume of paper. Like all shredders, the 97C will shut down if it overheats but I've never had mine quit on me.

This shredder also cuts up credit cards, CDs and DVD, and just about anything else within reason. It will cut right through paperclips and staples so you don't have to separate your documents before shredding them. It has a 10 gallon pull out wastebasket that accepts a plastic trash bag so it's easy to get the shredded documents to the trash or recycling bin.

Features include a sensor on top near the intake slot that stops the shredder if hands get too close. It has the standard auto stop on jamming feature and a reverse switch.

Although Fellowes lists the suggested price as \$419.98, the 97C sells for about \$200 on line. (I just bought one from Amazon for \$196). After about a year and a half of continuous use, I haven't found a flaw in this machine.

E. G. "Gerry" Morris is a small firm practitioner and has practiced law for over 29 years in Austin, Texas. He is certified as a Criminal Law Specialist by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. His firm web site is at www.egmlaw.com. Email your comments and questions to Gerry at tech@egmlaw.com.

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Coach's Corner continued from page 1

you ask.

Each chapter is only about 4-5 pages long. That allows you to pick a topic and read up on it on a "just in time" basis. Going to lunch with a prospect? Read Chapter 17: *Avoiding Random Acts of Lunch*. Scheduled to give a speech? Read Chapter 34: *Using Speaking to Win New Clients*. Serving on a non-profit board? Read Chapter 31: *Building Relationships with Board Members*.

Small firm attorneys may be turned off by the book's tendency to focus on the business development issues of big law firms, with chapters such as "Making Cross-Selling Work in Your Firm" and "Measuring the Return on Investment in Marketing Training." Nevertheless, *most* of the principles in the book will also apply to solo and small firm practices.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I must point out that I have been a member of the team giving follow-on coaching in connection with the *Rainmaking Made Simple* training program for several years. I formed my positive opinions about the book before teaming up with Mark Maraia, however.

2. How to Get and Keep Good Clients by Jay G. Foonberg and How to Start and Build a Law Practice by Jay G. Foonberg. Foonberg is an icon among law students who want to start their own law firms. His books have the "honor" of being the most frequently stolen from law school libraries. *How to Start and Build a Law Practice* is in its fifth edition and *How to Get and Keep Good Clients* is in its third edition, attesting to their long-term value in the legal marketplace.

I applaud Foonberg for giving very specific suggestions, such as a sample draft of a follow-up letter after attending a convention or trade show; suggested language to use in inquiring about why a client doesn't send you referrals; and what to say when someone asks for a business card and you don't have one.

A weak point: sometimes Foonberg addresses extremely basic issues, such as "*The Role of Clothing in Marketing Yourself*." A strong point: he peppers the books with concrete suggestions on how to increase your visibility in the marketplace and position yourself as an expert. Many of those suggestions can be implemented by both new and more seasoned lawyers.

Foonberg's books are good resources for new lawyers, providing advice on how to get started from the ground floor. A new lawyer should seek other resources in addition to Foonberg,

however. Despite the revised editions, his books have become a bit outdated.

Although I think Foonberg gives a lot of sound advice, I disagree with some of it. For example, in his chapter on what to say when someone asks what you do, Foonberg leans toward trying to sell yourself as able to handle a wide range of matters. In my article in the June 2007 issue of *The Practice Manager* titled "Get Remembered," I advised keeping your answer simple and concrete, which usually requires you to narrow the field, instead of broaden it. Concrete imagery makes your response more memorable and repeatable. That increases the likelihood that your listener will think of you when he (or a friend) has a need for your services. (If *this* explanation isn't concrete enough, just read my other article.)

Some people don't like the format of Foonberg's books. Many of the "chapters" are less than a page in length, with each chapter starting on a new page. That presents the content in a choppy way, and makes the hardback copy fat and heavy.

I don't really recommend Foonberg's books for experienced lawyers. They are more appropriate for newer lawyers who haven't really found their niche yet, and aren't familiar with the myriad of issues they will face in

See *Coach's Corner* on page 4

UPCOMING EVENTS

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"Nailing It: The Tools You Need for Today's Practice" May 15-16, 2008

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Nailing It is the first-ever program of its kind produced by the State Bar of Texas - 2 full days of practice management education! Learn tips and tricks to help streamline your management practices and increase efficiency in your office from experts from across the state and country. This program will tackle issues such as alternative billing methods, improving productivity, technology trends and much more.

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managing a law practice.

3. Rainmaking: The Professional's Guide to Attracting New Clients by Ford Harding. Harding's 1994 classic was updated, re-titled and re-released in March 2008 as *Rainmaking: Attract New Clients No Matter What Your Field*. The newer version contains some added chapters, but whichever version you purchase, it will be well worth the price.

Many lawyers go about their marketing efforts in a haphazard fashion, trying this and that, now and then. They have little clue as to which efforts really pay off. If you recognize that you need to become more systematic and strategic about your marketing, Harding tells you how to do it. He provides charts, lists, questionnaires and forms that guide you step-by-step in networking, writing articles, getting publicity, making presentations, building client relationships, writing proposals, setting fees and identifying which marketing strategies are more suited to your practice.

This book would be a great help to a lawyer who has experienced modest success, but wants to ramp up the revenues. Harding's method requires the lawyer to invest some time in planning and analysis, but if she does all of the exercises he recommends and implements a consistent marketing plan, I have no doubt she'll succeed.

Today even seasoned lawyers find the ground shifting under their feet when it comes to legal marketing, and they are looking for resources. I hope these book reviews will give attorneys a sense of where to start. For finding strategies that involve the Internet and technology, however, I recommend surfing the web. Technology and the opportunities it creates keep changing too fast for book publishing to keep up.

Debra Bruce (www.lawyer-coach.com) practiced law for 18 years before becoming a professionally trained Executive Coach for lawyers. She is Vice Chair of the Law Practice Management Committee of the State Bar of Texas, and board member and past leader of Houston Coaches Network, the Houston Chapter of the International Coach Federation. She welcomes your questions and comments at debra@lawyer-coach.com.

LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT TIP

Management Tips are provided by the State Bar of Texas and ABA Practice Management Advisors. The tips are not meant as legal advice, nor binding on the State Bar of Texas or the ABA.

Did you know that some web sites often neglect to include one vital piece of information - contact information? Don't fall victim to this common mistake, make sure that your contact information is clear and easy to find. Be sure to include not only the name of your firm and telephone number, but also physical and mailing address, fax number, and an email address. Also, you may want to add a map to show the location of your office to ensure that potential clients know how to get to there.

LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT SPECIAL OFFERS

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Risk Management: Survival Tools for Law Firms

Regular Price - \$89.95

Sale Price - \$62.95

Risk Management: Survival Tools for Law Firms helps your firm establish solid policies, procedures, and systems to minimize risk. This completely revised edition and accompanying CD provides a comprehensive overview of risk management, offers a practical approach to risk management evaluation, and steps to take to create a "best practice" plan.

Marketing Success Stories: Conversations with Leading Lawyers

Regular Price - \$74.95

Sale Price - \$52.45

This book is packed with practical ideas, innovative strategies, useful checklists, and sample marketing and action plans to help you implement a successful, multi-faceted, and profit-enhancing marketing plan for your firm. The accompanying CD-ROM contains a wealth of invaluable checklists, plans, and other sample reports, questionnaires, and templates--all designed to make implementing your marketing strategy as easy as possible!