

# Practice group marketing showcases expertise

By Doug Deloach

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Similar to the way skills specialization has become the norm in the medical profession, law firms are increasingly utilizing niche marketing strategies built around specific industry categories to grow and compete in today's marketplace.

In the metro area, an excellent resource for attorneys seeking to maximize their rainmaking skills is John Remsen Jr., president of **The Remsen Group**, which has been helping law firms implement marketing programs since 1997.



**Remsen**  
The Remsen Group

Traditionally, law firms were typically organized by category types, such as criminal, domestic or civil litigation, estate planning, corporate governance, tax law and real estate. A marketing plan, in cases when a firm was following one at all, usually consisted of offering a menu of legal services drawn from those categories.

"The mind-set of lawyers has always been to market what they do; I flip that idea around and focus on figuring out what is in demand in the marketplace," Remsen said.

According to Remsen, developing a business model based on a practice group marketing strategy is crucially important for small and midsized law firms.

Most such firms lack the depth of resources to compete against full-service law firms and the breadth of expertise to sustain a presence in every niche.

"They say it takes eight to 11 impressions to convert a prospect into a client," Remsen said. "If you're out there chasing around everything that moves, it's going to take a long time and use up a lot of resources to create those impressions."

By developing niche practice groups,

Remsen recommends starting with a niche in which the firm already has a measurable presence. Penetration is accomplished by building relationships within industry associations, sponsoring trade shows, and conducting seminars, as well as through new social media channels.

Mason W. Stephenson, office managing partner at **King & Spalding LLP** in Atlanta, said his firm began implementing a business development strategy closely resembling the niche practice group model in 2007.

"Rather than niche practicing, we call our strategy doubling down on our strengths," Stephenson said. Essentially, the strategy involved reviewing King & Spalding's core strengths with a focus on practice areas



**Stephenson**  
King & Spalding LLP

and industries that could be developed through lateral hiring and opening new offices in key markets. Areas chosen for special attention were energy, health care, international trade, international arbitration, pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical technology.

"In the case of health care, for example, even before the recent legislation, we knew this was going to be a growing arena, so we added partners in Houston, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, which is where our health-care practice is centered," Stephenson said.

Developing practice groups in response to evolving trends in litigation is a growing phenomenon.

During the past 40 years, **Davis, Matthews & Quigley P.C.** has pursued a

strategic approach that integrates multiple practice areas in service of what could be seen as a niche defined by the client.

"If you look at it from the outside, it might seem awkward or difficult to achieve the level of integration between areas of the law that we have," said Lee Drake, Davis, Matthews & Quigley's managing shareholder.

According to Drake, the typical Davis, Matthews & Quigley client is a high-net-worth individual who owns a business and whose needs range from commercial litigation to domestic relations, from real estate and taxation to estate planning and probate.

While Drake estimated "about 40 to 50 percent" of the business handled by Davis, Matthews & Quigley involves domestic relations and family law, over the decades the firm has nurtured expertise in specialty practice areas.

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