



Parlez-vous le français? Sprechen Sie Deutsch? ¿Habla usted español? Lei parla l'italiano?

How to Market Legal Services in Europe: Four Legal Marketers Sound Off
by Lindsay Griffiths

How is legal marketing different in Europe? That is a question that many internationally-minded marketers have asked themselves and at this year's Legal Marketing Association Annual Meeting, they were able to find some answers. During a session entitled "Kicking It Up a Notch: International Professional Services Marketing Best Practices," the assembled delegates were treated to expert opinions and advice from marketing professionals in France, Germany, Italy and Spain – four of only a handful of legal marketers in Europe.

A number of interesting observations were revealed, further cementing that while there are similarities in marketing everywhere, local knowledge is essential. The four marketers, moderated by Mark Greene, Ph.D., Director of Practice Development & Market Research at O'Melveny & Myers, began the session by weighing in on the background of the legal market in Europe. Eric Gardner De Beville, the Marketing and Business Development Manager for CMS Albinana & Suarez De Lezo, noted that while the United States and United Kingdom rely on a common law-based system, continental Europe uses a civil law system, based on the Napoleonic code – a difference that is important for marketing professionals to understand. With specific reference to Spain, he indicated that larger firms have resisted the trend towards merging, although firms are less likely to be made of up single practitioners for tax reasons. Claudia Schieblon, a principal of the Professional Management Network in Germany, indicated that there have been a number of changes to the legal market over the past ten years, most notably, the ability for lawyers to appear in any court in Germany, and open offices in any city in Germany. With this change, a number of national and international firms have appeared on the scene, encouraging German firms to be early adapters of legal marketing. Caura Barszcz, President of Juriste Associates, added her comments regarding the French legal market. She said that only 20% of firms are business firms, with 90% of these located in Paris and generating 80% of the revenue. French firms make up 60% of law firms in France, a third are American firms, and the remainder consist of the Big Four accounting firms, whose legal departments are often larger than those of some law firms. Sylvia Hodges of Hodges Consulting rounded out the panel with her thoughts on Italy. She suggested that firms interested in merging with other European firms come to Italy – a number of Italian firms are looking to merge with US firms. Further, she noted that the number of lawyers in Italy has almost tripled in the past fifteen years, with 80% of



current lawyers being single practitioners. Although this is the case, Sylvia added that she is seeing many more corporate law firm models now in Italy, with the caveat that normal economic principles don't always apply.

Mark posed the question of why people are doing legal marketing in Europe. Sylvia offered four reasons – the reduction in legal restrictions to marketing, for economic reasons (increased competition among firms), socio-environmental factors that lead to clients being more educated and less loyal, and technology and globalization, which allows firms to do business very differently. She boiled it all down to one major factor – competition. Eric agreed that this was the case in Spain as well, and added that the “me too” feeling is very prevalent as well. He observed that European firms don't have as high of a learning curve with legal marketing, because they can see what the US and UK have done, but he still struggles with putting together a legal marketing association in Spain.

Caura recognized that in France, there is both a war for talent and a war for clients, because the US has been so active in the French legal market. Although most firms still continue to use outside agencies for legal marketing, there is a trend towards moving marketers in-house. Differentiation is also considered very important to clients. Caura further observed that in-house and outside counsel are considered very differently in France – while it is possible to move between the two positions, in order to become in-house, a lawyer must relinquish their bar association membership and there is no governing body for in-house attorneys. Sylvia added that in many European countries, lawyers can not be considered “employees,” which accounts for the resistance to a more corporate model for a law firm. They see themselves as academics whose client is “justice.”

The marketers agreed that the acceleration of legal marketing is much faster in Europe than in the United States and Caura remembered a time when firms were not even allowed to send out Christmas cards, because it was considered “marketing.” As recently as a decade ago, there were very few marketers in Paris and those that were acted in a public relations capacity. Now, in Paris alone, there are over 60 legal marketers, and they are now doing more business development. She thinks they will eventually be able to do more sales work, but it depends on the culture and the partners' motivation. Mark asked how the clients felt about this trend towards marketing, and Caura answered that they love it, because now they have a choice between firms. Eric said that in Spain, clients are more faithful than they are in the rest of Europe, but they are using British firms with more regularity because it is considered “chic” to have an international firm.



When asked who is actually doing legal marketing, Claudia noted that in Germany, it's full time marketing professionals, most of whom have a minimum of two degrees and focus on business development. Sylvia said because Italy only saw its first legal marketers in 2001, they still don't have too many of them. There are over 100 legal marketers, many with marketing degrees, but they are paid as secretaries.

As far as which marketing tools are the most effective, these differed by country as well. Claudia said that in Germany, the most effective tools are speaking at conferences and seminars, and publishing articles. She added that clients do get a lot of seminar invitations though, so there are opportunities for innovative marketing in Germany that are not being capitalized on. Caura said that in France, the most effective tools are public relations, market surveys (competitive intelligence), articles, newsletters, events, CRM/CSR programs (Corporate Social Responsibility), pro bono work and sponsorships. She was adamant that diversity is not important to clients in France or in other parts of Europe, saying that the law even dictates rules of privacy in this regard.

Sylvia said that relationships are of paramount importance in Italy, so seminars are a waste of time, and clients complain that articles and newsletters by lawyers are too technical and don't address their needs adequately. She did add that some firms do have extranets and RSS feeds. Sylvia also advised that no business be conducted in Italy during July and August, because most Italians are on vacation. With regard to Spain, Eric commented that they don't have a lot of "sexy" legal marketing, although they do distinguish between marketing and business development, where they are more creative. They have practice groups, industry groups, and European growth groups which all target clients specifically. Two groups are KATs and DOGs – Key Account Teams, who identify the key accounts to work with, and Dedicated Opportunistic Glamour, which dictates how lawyers work with key accounts. Governed by the three Rs – Relationships, Reputation, and Revenues, firms look to build the relationships, which leads to positive reputations, which increases revenues.

Mark observed that there had been a number of references to lawyers as academics, and wondered whether lawyers are also recognizing the business of law in Europe. Eric agreed that they are, and cited the programs he had mentioned. Claudia said that in Germany, the clients are looking for a legal consultant to be by their side, not an academic and Caura added that they are transitioning in France, with firms being organized as companies more and more. Sylvia said that in Italy, the lawyers' focus on relationships puts them in the ideal position of already being in their clients' confidence.



Eric added that the role of academics is not to be dismissed as out of date though, and said that many firms in Spain have one or two academics on staff.

The group then added their thoughts on a number of varied issues. Caura noted that EU law doesn't influence the way that European law firms think, but it does influence US law firms, because it is restrictive of where they can open offices. On women lawyers, Caura said that although only 20% of their partners are women, 57% of their associates are women. However, Eric said that most firms in Spain have no women lawyers, and Sylvia agreed, saying that while it depends upon the firm, most Italian firms are made up of men. Claudia indicated that this is changing in Germany, with the life/work balance becoming more important.

Speaking about growth over the next ten to fifteen years, Caura said that in France, the focus is on private equity, labor law, public law and technology law. Claudia agreed for Germany, stating that particular attention would be paid to private equity. Sylvia joined the consensus, but added that IP law, particularly trademark, would also see growth. Eric said Spain will see growth in M&A and corporate law, banking and finance, infrastructure, and hotel & leisure.

Mark inquired about media relations, asking what percentage of the budget is dedicated to this and what the main challenges are. In Spain, 5-10% of the budget goes to media relations, and the challenge is using it correctly and having lawyers write more often in the local media. For Italy, firms do not yet do budgets, but their preferred marketing tool is media relations. Caura agreed with regard to France, saying that their budget is growing with the industry, but is still a blur. Their challenge is with the paying press – it's difficult to teach the lawyers that paying to be published isn't worthwhile. In Germany, Claudia said that media relations are low on the priority list, although there are two or three papers that do a weekly legal paper, which includes some attorney articles. She reiterated that lawyers have difficulty thinking about the writers' perspective.

The final question addressed the amount of international marketing being done by European firms. In general, the group agreed that very little was being done unless US or UK firms were doing it. One notable exception is Germany, where firms are doing international marketing within Europe. Eric also agreed that this is client driven, and Spanish firms will be doing more European marketing in the future.