

Ernie Svenson: Hi everyone and welcome to another episode of Law Firm Autopilot. In the last episode, I gave you a quick overview of the foundation part of the success blueprint for creating a practice. As you recall, there are three main parts to the success blueprint. Number one, foundation. Number two, the profit engine or marketing which is about getting clients easily and steadily. Three, operations or how you make the practice run smoothly in a way that gives you peace of mind.

Last time we covered most of the foundation part. We didn't get to cover how to find good people to help you with your practice. Today we're going to drill into that last piece and talk about that. Now you'll recall I mentioned it's hard to find the right people to help you. Bar association **[inaudible 00:00:53]** programs aren't going to cut it. Instead, you need to find the right consultants, guides or business coaches. But the bad news is this isn't easy. We're going to talk about how you can get success in finding those right people.

We'll start by covering the five keys of finding consultants or guides that are good. The ones that you need, because the thing is out there, available to you are people that can help you with business coaching, with technology, with marketing different things and there's no one person that knows everything you need to know. You need to find several people. How many depends on what you need help with and when you need help with it. But you need someone that's going to help you execute your success plan so that you stay on track, Stay focused and get the results you want.

The folks that can help you out there- the ones that you want to hire- I would say have five qualities; Number one they're knowledgeable. Okay. In areas where of course they have to be knowledgeable. But knowledgeable about what? Knowledgeable about the specific thing that you need help with. If you need help with technology, that's a big area.

But you want somebody who is knowledgeable about the technology problem that you need help with. If the problem you need help with is automating a document assembly so that you can create briefs or contracts much more quickly then you need somebody who's not just knowledgeable about technology in a general way, but someone who is knowledgeable about technology involving automation of documents.

Or if it's networking or if it's setting a backup, or whatever it is that you need help with, they need to be knowledgeable in that area. Then they need to be reliable. They need to be reliable in the sense that they are in business for long term. They're not fly by night. But also that they get consistently good results with people.

The more that you see that they've been in business and if they have testimonials and you see that they've helped other lawyers or other lawyers recommend them and say yes they did great work. You can see that they're consistently doing good work and reliable, that's a good thing. One of the things that you should look for when you're hiring somebody and this is a Tell-Tale, that they might not be reliable, not guaranteed that this is true. But if they're running their business in a kind of haphazard way.

It looks like they're not communicating successfully. They're kind of random in how they communicate. You can just tell that's probably not somebody that's running their business well. While we all might feel empathy for those folks because we have been there or maybe we are there now. It's just going to compound your problems if you're already disorganized and struggling to hire somebody who's in the same boat as you.

You need these folks to be running their businesses well. You also want them to be professional. You don't want amateurs, even if they're reliable and they're knowledgeable, but they're your brother-in-law and this is what he's doing on the side. You do not want those people. You want people that are doing this as their main business, because if you're doing something as your business you take it more seriously: you meet deadlines, you're focused on doing things in the most efficient way and so forth. So, you want somebody who is a professional.

In many cases, not all, but in many cases, you would want somebody who's focused on helping lawyers. Now in the marketing realm, I would say most of the people in there who are focused on helping lawyers are not what you want to look for and I'll talk about that in a second. But in certain areas like picking practice management software.

Well, you want somebody who focuses on the legal market, or if it's automating your workflows and doing document assembly. It's better if you hire somebody who's already worked with lawyers. They know what kind of documents lawyers create and certain issues with the kinds of documents the lawyers create. You want to find somebody who's professionally focused on the legal market.

You want somebody who has all these qualities and so far, you could find people who have all three of those qualities and that's hard but not super hard. But when you add this next one number four, it becomes really hard. That is the quality of being trustworthy. By that, I mean someone who will give you advice that helps you even though it doesn't benefit them or maybe even hurts them.

There are consultants out there and there's not many of them now, but I've gotten to know all the ones in the legal tech world and the legal marketing world and everything else. I know who the folks are, who will say to somebody because I've seen them do it, "You say you want to do that but that's probably not the best thing to do. You should do this other thing and go with this other company," and I'll say, "but wait, you can't help me-" the person says, "right because my goal is to help you have success however that occurs."

They have a fiduciary mindset as opposed to a transactional mindset or opportunistic mindset. We all understand everybody needs to make money and it's unusual that people would say well, I see an opportunity somebody wants to hire me. In most cases they're not being devious or underhanded, it's just their mindset tends to think, "I'll just do whatever the person hired me to do and not think about whether there's something else they could do."

They don't think about it. But the ones that are really good will refer you out and part the reason why they'll refer you out is they already have a lot of great clients, they're

happy with the clients they have. The only one other happy clients and they see like, "well if we give this person this recommendation does it really make sense? There's a good chance they won't be happy and they'll come back and blame me." The people that are really good are knowledgeable, reliable, professional, in many cases focused on a legal market and trustworthy. Those are four.

Then the fifth one is another indicator. That is, is the person articulate? Meaning are they good at explaining what you need and why you need it. The charlatans are the people that are kind of confused and just managing their practice in a haphazard way. The practice of helping people in a haphazard way. They will be kind of unclear about things and they won't be. They won't hold up under cross-examination. You really need to ask them a lot of questions and you need to understand. If you don't understand, that's a bad sign. That means you're not explaining things well.

You want articulate and you want-- the five things are, to recap; knowledgeable, reliable and professional probably focus on the legal market in many cases, trustworthy and articulate. Notice I haven't said anything about low cost. I didn't say anything about cost, and that's because you want the best help that you can afford. If you can afford it and it doesn't have those criteria that's probably going to be a bad thing, right? Having a cost-cutting mentality is really a form of short-term thinking.

Remember we're focused on the long-term and the long prize we're looking three years out. We're building a successful firm. We can't afford to have setbacks caused by short-term thinking and cost-cutting mentality. The best folks out there they charge more because they can and they should, because they're good. When your reputation as a law firm as a lawyer soars because number one you do great work. Number two you have great marketing that attracts great clients, you'll start charging more too. You won't have to deal with lower quality clients.

You want to be in the higher quality level, you are going to need to hire people that can help you do that. Think of it as an investment, right? The short-term thinking is "oh, this is an expense, I'm going to get rid of this expense." It may appear to be an expense but it's really an investment. Now let me tell you some qualities of people that you want to avoid.

Now, these are people that don't have these criteria but they may look like they have these criteria to you, or you may be around them and think they can help you.

Okay, number one-- bar association practice management advisers, there are some that are good, but a lot of the really good ones have gone out on their own to start their own business. They're making good money, getting great results for lawyers like you because they can. If they liked working in a bureaucracy like the bar association they would have stayed there. But most of the ones there, the best ones to help are the lawyers realize they can help our lawyers do it in the way that they want. Get great results, make good money and they go out and do it on their own.

I would say Bar Association PMAs can be helpful in some instances, but they're not something that you're going to lean heavily on and you need to go beyond them. There are folks out there who have left as I said, if you need recommendations I will be happy to give them to you. Another thing you want to avoid especially if you go to

any kind of like conference, like the ABA tech show or what I call the waggy tail startups.

These are techies who created some new cool thing that they think lawyers need and a lot of it's practice management related. So they say, "Oh, you need this new practice management software," and by the way, there's a hundred or more of the practice management software out there. They're coming all the time, this is just bugs on your windshield and you just need to avoid these people. They mean well, they're thriving trying to get going whatever.

That's not your problem, your problem is to create a strategic practice according to a plan. These folks are just desperate to hire new people, sign new lawyers up, you want to avoid them. They're nice people, but they're in the startup mode and you don't want to be with them. Also to be avoided are unscrupulous, tasteless, get rich quick charlatans mostly in the marketing world. This is why I said earlier that in the legal realm-- it's probably best not to get people that are focused on a legal profession unless you understand what's actually required to get good clients, which we're going to cover in future episodes.

You don't want these people that are like, "hey, I can get you a bunch of great new clients super fast," they're not going to get you great clients, they're not going to try to build trust. They're just going to send you a bunch of leads and you're going to have to pay for them and at first, you're probably going to get great leads and then you'll quickly have them dry up because they can't just give everybody that they-- that hires them great leads because there aren't that many great leads and it takes work to get great leads, they're not going to help.

Then last there's a catch all group I would call the benevolent but clueless people. This will include the tech of Angeles, the people just love technology, they think it's great. You get a tech zealots , telling you about the newest iPad thing or there's a new stylist or something, you know, and I was one of those people I understand it's-- that's fine but it's not strategic and you want to not use them, not lean heavily on them.

Then there are people that are not really great at marketing but they love networking and that's how they got their business and then they go, "oh, I can teach you marketing because I'm really good at networking." As I said, marketing-- there's referral marketing and then there's the harder kind , which is where you get people that are complete strangers to trust you online and hire you and most people in the legal world that I've encountered do not understand how to build trust effectively online.

A lot of people seem to but when you break it down and look at what's really going and you'll see that they don't. Avoid them and also avoid anyone online; techies, blog people, social media mavens, because remember when you're trying to learn marketing online that's like trying to be a Formula One race car driver. These are people saying, "hey, look, I can drive a car, let me show you how to drive a car." You can go into and sign up for some race and you can race that Formula One racing you make a bunch of money and that'll be great.

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Notice they're not racing themselves in that area, they're not making money online easily but they're going to tell you how to do it and you'll assume that they know what they're talking about because they have a website, it looks cool and yours doesn't look cool and you think, well, if I make a cool website I'll make money online and that is the biggest myth ever.

You want to avoid those kind of people, find the ones who have the five qualities that you need, which is that they're knowledgeable, reliable, professional, trustworthy and articulate.

As I said if you have-- you need somebody help prefer you to find this folks, I'm happy to do it, just shoot me an email or visit Law Firm Autopilot. That's it, that wraps up our examination of the foundation piece of the success blueprint and that leaves two parts left to cover which is profitability or marketing and trust building really what that's about and then third operations.

Now remember, if you're eager to make more progress in growing your practice you can go to lawfirmautopilot.com, sign up for the membership and a free VIP program, it's a great way to get access to some very helpful resources all of which are free.

We also have a Facebook group that's free, and all you have to do is search in Facebook for Law Firm Autopilot and you'll find our group, click on the button that says 'request to join' and we'll approve you right away. That's it for this episode of Law Firm Autopilot and the next episode I'll be talking about the profit/marketing piece of the blueprint and I look forward to seeing you then. Until then, I wish the best for you and your practice, take care everyone.