



Ann Marie Miller is EVERYWHERE!

The uncertainty of law firm advertising >

Executive Summary:

In law, there's advertising and there's advertising. Both seem to work.



By David Perry

"We wanted more clients. In order to get clients, you have to advertise."

It seemed pretty obvious to new-to-Roanoke Ann Marie Miller, a bankruptcy lawyer whose ads are all over town. It's been 32 years since *Bates v. State Bar of Arizona* first allowed lawyers to advertise their services, and that one Supreme Court decision has sure made for some interesting television.

Locals may remember personal injury attorney Jeff Krasnow's famous ad that a judge talking in "mumbo-jumbo," and another in which a divorcing couple split their furniture—with a chainsaw. More recently,





Kim Merritt and Maryellen Goodlatte: Glenn, Feldman, Darby & Goodlatte encourages its attorneys to become involved in the community

David Perry

Roanoke attorney Daniel L. Crandall has relied on heaping helpings of sincerity in his TV ads, which showcase testimonials from salt-of-the-earth clients combined with a shot of Crandall atop Mill Mountain pledging care and compassion.

If you have to advertise to get clients, why doesn't every law firm in town do it?

"We have deliberately chosen not to advertise," said Maryellen Goodlatte of Glenn, Feldmann, Darby & Goodlatte

firms that have set up shop in Roanoke, share a similar, but slightly less conservative strategy.

Russell Lawson, marketing director for Sands Anderson, says his company's primary goal is to reach business people, and that guides his media buys.

"Is it aimed at business? We tend to send our messages through vehicles that reach that audience," says Lawson. That includes National Public Radio, which Lawson says



We want the attorneys spending some shoe leather in marketing as opposed to the firm itself putting money down.

—Russell Lawson, Sands Anderson

(GFD&G), one of the oldest law firms in town. Instead, she says the firm encourages its attorneys to become involved in the community and forge relationships.

"We try to follow that very traditional, old-fashioned belief that good work is its own marketing," she says. She adds that the firm's support for local events like the Greek Festival help to get its name out while supporting a good cause.

Relative newcomers LeClairRyan and Sands Anderson Marks & Miller, both out-of-town

reaches a "largely a business-oriented audience. It skews higher in education and income."

Like GFD&G, Lawson says Sands Anderson values its attorneys getting out into the community.

"We try to keep our perspective about how useful advertising is and concentrate instead on getting our attorneys out of the office talking to people who can actually give them work," Lawson says. "We want the attorneys spending some shoe leather in marketing as opposed

to the firm itself putting money down.”

Old-line Roanoke firms Woods Rogers and Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore often appear in business publications.

While LeClairRyan advertises in some local publications in the region, Franta says, “It’s more for name and brand awareness. We encourage our attorneys to become very involved in their communities. It’s networking, it’s word of mouth, it’s letting our work stand for itself.”


Few traditional law firms do TV advertising in Roanoke, but for Sands Anderson, it’s not because of any ambulance chaser stereotypes.

“We’re likely never to be a television advertiser, because of the expense,” says Lawson, whose firm has a relatively small

advertising budget. “In terms of steady advertising dollars, if we break \$100,000 a year, that’s a real unusual year.”

Being new in town, Miller chose to spend the money on advertising rather than take a more conservative, referral-based approach.

“That might work for prestigious firms and firms that deal with people that have a lot of money, but if you want to get people from a cross-section of society who may not know a lawyer, then you’re going to have to advertise,” says Miller, who occupies a small office on Williamson Road, several miles from the downtown law firms.

Miller advertises on billboards, TV, radio, the daily newspaper, the Verizon Yellow Pages, and the EZ to Use Big Book directory. It seems to be working: “Right now we have all the business that we can possibly handle.” 

bankruptcy & creditors' rights | construction | corporate | environmental | estate planning
family law | health law | intellectual property | labor & employment | **litigation**
local government | real estate & land use | regulated industries | tax

strategy *litigation*

For ten years, the Greeks and Trojans waged a draining and costly war. The Greeks finally brought it to an end with a masterstroke of strategy. Defending everything you’ve worked for can feel like waging war. Our litigation team is in battle every day for our clients.

Woods Rogers — we’ll work to end the siege.



woodsrogers.com | 800 552-4529

ROANOKE | DANVILLE | BLACKSBURG | LYNCHBURG | RICHMOND

Authorized by Nicholas C. Conte, Chairman, on behalf of the firm.