

A delicate dance: marketing in the legal profession

By AdvocateDaily.com Staff

Jaye Hooper, chair of [The Federation of Ontario Law Associations](#) (FOLA) tells *Law Times* she worries about the impact on the public's perception when litigators advertise "free" services, noting that while initial consultations are often without charge, even contingency-fee arrangements can create economic exposure.

To the average member of the public, "it sounds as if it is all free," she says.

Hooper says FOLA, which advocates on behalf of the 46 local law associations in the province, supports recent changes made by the Law Society of Ontario (LSO) around referral fees and advertising.

"We just hope [the LSO] will continue to enforce the rules," she says.

Since the new rules came into effect, the LSO has started disciplinary hearings against a number of firms related to their marketing practices, reports the online legal news site.

In an interview with AdvocateDaily.com, Hooper says emphasizing "free" services does not necessarily get the clients in the door.

"I often wonder if the lawyers are more worried about securing the retainer rather than preparing the client for what is to come," she says.

"Clients are savvy," Hooper tells *Law Times*. "They may now seek out free initial consultations with two or three lawyers. Litigation is a tough slog. I try to be frank with them, but some lawyers do not point out the struggles because they want the retainer."

More positive ways to secure clients include leveraging technology and social media forums to network or market legal services, Hooper says, noting there are a variety of templates that allow lawyers to inexpensively produce a professional website or social media platform.

"In an area like Toronto, it is very hard to stand out. In Ottawa, we are a collegial bar, and people get to know each other," she says.

"My best cases have come through referrals rather than cold calls or as a result of any advertising initiative, Hooper tells AdvocateDaily.com. "I always recommend young lawyers build networks with lawyers who have other types of practices."