

Law Firm Leaders Spotlight with Heather J. Oden

State your name, title and law firm.

Heather J. Oden, Chief Operating Officer at Ball Janik LLP.

How long have you been working in law firm management?

I have spent over 20 years working in law firm management, finance and accounting, marketing, information systems, human resources, and administration for Ball Janik, LLP as well as other firms nationally.

How have your marketing efforts evolved during the last five years?

Our law firm operates coast-to-coast with offices in Florida and Oregon. Over the last five years, we have focused on enhancing our connectivity and technology to help us better communicate with one another and strategize together to solve client problems. Ball Janik's approach has become much more focused on collaboration between our lawyers and our marketing team to identify and develop solutions for natural business growth through careful planning and initiatives such as business development, social media strategy, media placements, website development and new offerings for our clients that bring high value to their business strategies.

How has working closely with your Marketing Department been beneficial to the firm in the months since COVID-19 began?

Our marketing team helped us pivot our business focus by introducing new ways of doing business and identifying fresh solutions to our clients. For instance, while traditional conferences and networking events have taken a back seat, Ball Janik lawyers are able to deliver multiple webinars per day for our clients and we can continue to bring them valuable advice with virtual networking.

What are some new marketing initiatives that your firm has worked on as a result of COVID-19?

Our marketing team has been a critical driving force in our firm's response to COVID-19 and our firm's ability to be agile and adapt. In many ways, we have accelerated our offerings to our client base. In the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we looked at new government initiatives such as the CARES ACT and discussed the impacts on community associations, landlords, tenants and more by advising our clients on best practices to protect themselves. We met with our clients virtually, and delivered legal trends and ideas while we offered new ways to grow their business. We have always had the "we are in this together" mindset and we plan to enhance our communication through more seminars, blog posts, social media and other initiatives to help our clients stay ahead of changing laws and regulations.

How does your Marketing Department drive strategic plans and lead the charge in a time of change?

We are constantly looking at our client's top pain points and assessing our overall business strategy. Gone are the days when lawyers are hired to do only a good job. Our clients demand more, and it is critical to provide full spectrum legal services and anticipate needs to deliver solutions. We are fortunate to have long-term clients and those relationships remain strong because we are constantly putting ourselves in their shoes and asking how we can help them grow and how we can make things easier for them. We know that COVID-19 has changed the business landscape and we have made ourselves even more readily available, since we are not spending as much time on the road and engaged in travel. We are constantly staying on top of industry news and providing advice that may affect our client's industries to help them plan.

What is your firm's most effective marketing channel?

It really is difficult to only pick one channel because so many of our clients consume information differently and there is no one-size-fits-all. However, by working together with our marketing team, we recognize the most effective marketing through COVID-19 and after is to continue mastering technology and bolster our advice and offerings online by providing valuable information, newsworthy blog posts and articles, social media messaging, and more.

What marketing and business development initiatives born out of COVID-19 will be used in the future?

At Ball Janik, we operate with an opportunistic mindset and while COVID-19 is a pandemic none of us expected, it has forced us to shift our use of technology even more to enhance our marketing and business development initiatives. Instead of spending our time flying or commuting to a client location, we now meet with our clients using technology, hold virtual office hours to provide legal advice, make introductions and more. This allows all of us to think ahead and move at a faster pace to provide value in an uncertain time.

How do you see the legal industry changing in the next 5 years?

The legal marketing industry has made great strides over the last five years to drive change in the legal space, but the way we do business has changed even more in the last eight months. Legal marketers are critical in helping law firms assess offerings and advance client service. Today, we are meeting regularly with our clients via video, some from their homes with their families in the background. Moving forward, the legal landscape will change even more, and this is an exciting time to embrace a virtual business model with enhanced presence that drives growth now and in the future.