



## How One Company Used Product & Service Development to Reach Its Market of Busy Lawyers & Grow to \$24 Million in Revenue

By Mary Flaherty, Manager, Research and Content Development

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### Case Study Series: What's Working in Marketing & Selling Professional Services

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#### OVERVIEW

In May 2002, Ed Scanlan launched a small, interactive marketing agency based out of his apartment above an Italian ice stand in Chicago's Bucktown neighborhood. He started out developing affordable websites and online marketing campaigns for small businesses in a variety of industries. Quickly, he began to add staff. By 2005, attorneys in small law firms and solo practices were a growing segment of the business. That's when Scanlan recognized the opportunity to build a scalable business: creating a common set of tools on a technology-enabled platform—instead of completely custom solutions—that would deliver affordable business services to a narrowly-defined market.



So, he brought attorney and former client Kevin Chern on board as partner. Chern, who had been the managing director of one the largest consumer law firms in the country, had the necessary industry experience to complement Scanlan's technical and marketing skills. Thus, Total Attorneys was born—a managed service provider for small law firms and solo practitioners that delivered services to eliminate the administrative burden of running a law practice. But, figuring out how best to grow a business in a market of hundreds of thousands of practitioners would be a challenge.

#### SITUATION

##### The Challenge: Reaching an Audience of Busy Professionals

According to Scanlan, Total Attorneys' market included the 550,000 lawyers in the U.S. working in firms with fewer than 10 attorneys. "What we set out to do was to create a platform where we aggregated the demand of thousands of attorneys and centralized the resources associated with administrative tasks," he says. The services the company offered included: marketing campaign automation, website development, business development, call center management, document processing, and more. Clients could pick and choose the services they signed up for on a monthly pay-as-you go basis.

While the size of the market offered significant growth potential for the company, it also posed a major marketing challenge: how to demonstrate the value of the company's services to a widely-distributed audience of busy legal professionals?

Attending legal conferences and trade shows—ranging from the American Bar Association tech show to the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys to local bar conferences—was one strategy they used. However, finding the resources to send staff was an issue. Says Scanlan, "We'd actually like to be at all of these events, but there's dozens week across the country on different topics and different areas."

The company also advertised on Google AdWords, which did drive traffic to TotalAttorneys.com. However, their target market was not overly active online—attorneys were busy delivering legal services and running their small businesses. The company would need another approach in order to reach more of their potential clients and grow the business.

#### APPROACH

##### Involve Clients in Development of Services

Total Attorneys found the solution in a combination of modern software development principles (called "agile principles") and old-fashioned prospect outreach (cold calling).

Agile principles typically refer to software development methodologies; however, Scanlan took the approach—which is based on using small teams, self-organization, accountability, and iterative product development to rapidly develop and launch customer-driven

products and services—and applied it to the entire business, including sales and marketing.

*Once we know where their problems are, we can talk about innovative solutions we can put together to address these pain points.*

-Ed Scanlan, Total Attorneys

"As an agile company," says Scanlan, "we launch new products in partnership with our clients. So, we're constantly going to them and asking them, 'Where are the pain points in your office?'" The company started launching new services only after first running a pilot (or beta) with a handful of clients. Services were refined based on client feedback and only after this iterative process was a service introduced to the customer base at large. According to Scanlan, "By taking this agile approach to product development and doing it in conjunction with our customers, we're able to develop solutions that are of broad appeal, that are developed based on the exact need that's currently being faced by the solo practitioner or small law firm."

### **Integrate Product Development and Sales**

Within the company, small cross-functional teams were formed to develop new service offerings in partnership with existing clients. It's all client focused says Scanlan, "We get to know them really well. Once we know where their problems are, we can talk about innovative solutions we can put together that address these pain points."

Involving clients in this way ultimately drove the sales process. Because of the method the company used to introduce services, they already knew they were delivering a service that was either saving clients' time or increasing ROI. And that made the job of the business developers that much easier. The sales staff sourced their own leads, generally by researching lawyers and firms online—but when they made the outbound calls, they found much of the groundwork for a sale was already laid.

"When we call into a firm," reports Scanlan, "it's very rare that they're not interested at all about hearing what we're doing—it's innovative. They're willing to give us a try because it's low risk: there's no long-term contract, there's no upfront fee, and they can cancel any time."

He continues, "We have many firms that tell us we've revolutionized the way that they practice law. So, if you've got something that's really innovative and you know actually works, that is you're not just trying to sell something you already had developed, but trying to develop something with the people you're going to try and sell it to, I think that's probably the reason we have success in our cold calling."

The product development cycle was completely integrated with sales. For example, about six months ago, the company started development on a bankruptcy case support service. They got five firms to agree to work with them on development and provide feedback. When the initial five firms were happy with the delivery of the service, the company got another five firms involved, then another five. The product and sales teams worked closely together to identify the types of firms to bring into the development process and then actually went out and found the appropriate firms for the pilot. Thus, when the service was launched, the business developers had actual user experiences to share with potential new customers. The company is hoping to have as much as 5% of its revenue come from this product in 2009.

### **Create Agile Sales Teams**

The agile principles were also translated to the structure and targets of the business developers. Sales teams were set up in small groups of five people with three-week sales goals instead of annual targets. With an average sales cycle of two-to-three weeks (and sometimes less) this worked well. It allowed the company to more easily adjust strategy and forecasts based on new service introductions and shifts in demand and other external factors. Every three weeks, sales goals were re-set and territories were re-shuffled. "We're able to align our sales objectives with whatever the latest objectives are of our agile product movement," says Scanlan.

### **RESULTS**

By aligning their product development and sales under the umbrella of agile principles, Total Attorneys—now with 200+ full-time employees—has managed to continue growing in a tough economic environment. While Scanlan does not expect to continue doubling revenue every year as they've done since Total Attorneys was founded, he does expect the company—which had revenue of \$24 million in 2008—to see double-digit growth in 2009, at least that's a goal he sees as completely attainable.

#### **Fast Facts**

**200+ employees**  
**9500% growth 2005-2008**  
**\$24 million revenue in 2008**

"One thing that is really propelling our growth," says Scanlan, "is putting the pedal to the metal when it comes to innovation, when everybody else is pulling back." He continues, "There's a paradigm shift going on in the legal [profession] on how legal services are delivered. We feel that we are on the cutting edge and thought leaders in leading this shift. [The result will be] improvements for legal practitioners and the people who are consuming these legal services. It's really going to result in a better industry and we're happy to be a part of that movement."

### Additional Insights Shared by Total Attorneys

- **The strategy is to just be honest and transparent:** Here's our product road map. Here's what we're working on. Here's where we think we're headed with our company. Here's the type of clients we're going to be servicing. Here's all the feedback that we're getting from our law firms. Here's the good. Here's the negative. And, here's how we're going to try and improve the negative.
- **Don't be so blind as to think your service is perfect for everybody.** We only want win-win relationships. So, a certain level of attrition is probably a good thing, but you want clients to leave on good terms.
- **Continue to evolve.** Our business will never be static as we continue to uncover more things that we're able to do to alleviate the administrative burden of our clients. We don't believe in the five-year plan. We've got a very grand vision of where we want to take the organization. We've got really talented people working here and we are taking it step by step.

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**Editor's Note:** Read the Q&A Interview with Ed Scanlan, *Using Social Media to Build Trust and a Brand*.

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### RESOURCES

Total Attorneys website: [www.totalattorneys.com](http://www.totalattorneys.com)

*Getting Real: The smarter, faster, easier way to build a successful web application*, by 37signals: [gettingreal.37signals.com](http://gettingreal.37signals.com) (a book about using agile principles)

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