

NO MONEY, MO' PROBLEMS: ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION WITH NO BUDGET

Bryan T. McLeod
Caroliniana Padgett
Francis Marion University

Southern Illinois Legal Services, of Sesser, Illinois was a non-profit law office that provided a full range of legal services to those who did not qualify for free legal services but couldn't afford to pay the high costs of other legal services. The firm was started by two recent law school graduates, Derek Jordan and Kaci Myers. When Derek and Kaci decided to start the law firm, they had a marketing budget of \$20 a month. Utilizing every channel possible, Derek and Kaci had to learn on-the-go how best to promote their firm to their target audience.

INTRODUCTION

"I think we should spend our advertising money on more traditional media!" exclaimed Kaci. She continued, "I feel that advertising via radio or television will give us the most value for our money. Many residents of this area are older and do not use technology to find legal services." Derek rebutted, "I disagree. While many residents are older, there is a large population of residents who are comfortable using technology. They have smart phones and use them for browsing the internet and social media. I feel that if we use the money to advertise and promote Southern Illinois Legal Services on the internet and social media, we will reach a greater number of potential clients. It will also be cheaper to maintain once we start."

"We agreed that our purpose was to serve those in the community who could not afford to pay the high costs of legal services but also didn't qualify for Land of Lincoln's services," Kaci explained, referring to the free legal clinic. "We have to make sure that whatever method we use reaches potential clients. We do not have money to waste using ineffective advertising. We need to keep in mind the area in which we are serving. There was a survey conducted by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute which stated that 18% of the citizens of Williamson and Jackson County do not have internet access. It also stated that 50% of those who do not have internet earn less than \$30,000 a year. They even said that those who earned more were more likely to have internet access." (Duncan 2015).

"I understand what you are saying, but we simply don't have the funds to use traditional media to advertise." Derek responded. "Advertising via traditional

media is a lot more expensive than advertising via digital and social media platforms.”

Kaci responded, “If money for advertising is an issue, we could always take the Mayor’s offer of representing the city in foreclosure cases on dilapidated properties in the city. We could also take some clients who can pay full price for legal services. This would allow us to increase our advertising budget.”

Derek responded, “Do we really want to do that? That would go against the mission of our firm. That could backfire and damage our reputation with our target market. Also, can we agree that times are changing?” Derek asked. “According to a survey conducted by the International Advertising Bureau (IAB), Americans spent 1.5 billion minutes online in June 2016. Nearly 2/3 of that time was on mobile devices. They even state that consumers spend most of their time using entertainment services and social media sites. This gives us the opportunity to use social media, which is cheaper, to reach potential clients,” Derek continued. “Whenever someone is in need of goods or services, they turn to the internet. While we may reach a lot of people using traditional methods, many of them will not be potential clients. We will be wasting money advertising to people who do not want or need our services.”

Derek and Kaci were at odds because they both felt strongly about how to best advertise their business: South Illinois Legal Services. But like many other businesses, they did not have a large marketing budget to be able to utilize multiple approaches.

THE ATTORNEYS

DEREK JORDAN

Derek Jordan was a 31-year-old recent graduate from Southern Illinois School of Law. Derek grew up in Sesser, a small town of about 1,800 people in Southern Illinois. Growing up, Derek always knew that he wanted to serve the community. After high school, he enlisted in the United States Navy. During his time in the military, he gained experience in information technology, networking, and communications. After serving in the Navy for eight years, Derek decided it was time for him to go to school. Derek was honorably discharged from the Navy and began his college career at Southern Illinois University (SIU).

During his undergraduate career at SIU, Derek became involved with many student organizations. Part of his duties in these organizations was website development and social media promotions. He effectively marketed the organizations, helping them to recruit new members and promote the organizations’ various events.

In May 2016, Derek graduated from Southern Illinois University with his bachelor's and began law school in August 2016. During his time in law school Derek was an extern for the Jackson County State Attorney's office in Murphysboro, IL. As an extern for the State Attorney's office, the high level of poverty in Southern Illinois was on full display. Almost every defendant that came into court was represented by the public defender. It was also during law school that Derek met Kaci Myers. He and Kaci found that they both shared a passion for helping others.

KACI MYERS

Kaci Myers was a 39-year-old recent law school graduate from Rockford, a city of around 150,000 in Northern Illinois. Kaci attended Northern Illinois University and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics in 2015. After graduation, Kaci moved to Carbondale, Illinois to begin law school at Southern Illinois University School of Law.

While in law school Kaci knew that she wanted to serve the public interest. She was an extern for Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance. During her externship at Land of Lincoln, Kaci was exposed to the poverty of Southern Illinois. Kaci graduated with her Juris Doctor in May 2019. She also earned her Master of Law in Public Service Law from Southern Illinois University School of Law in 2019.

THE FIRM

Southern Illinois Legal Services (SILS) is a non-profit law office located in the city of Sesser in Franklin County, Illinois. It was created with the purpose of serving the community by providing quality legal services to individuals who might otherwise go unrepresented. SILS was founded by two new attorneys, Derek Jordan and Kaci Myers. Although they both had multiple job opportunities, both Derek and Kaci wanted to do something that would help the local communities. They researched the legal market of Southern Illinois and discovered that there was a huge gap in legal services available to the community. On one hand, there was Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance that catered to individuals who fell way below the poverty line and could not afford to pay the high costs associated with legal services. On the other hand, there were traditional legal offices. The average law office in Southern Illinois required a \$1,500 retainer and charged \$500 an hour. To meet the needs of individuals who did not qualify for free legal services, but could not afford traditional legal services, they founded SILS. The firm offered legal services in many areas, including family law, criminal defense, and contracts.

SILS was created to serve counties of Franklin, Williamson, Jackson, Perry, Union, Johnson, Hamilton, Saline, Pope, and White counties in Southern Illinois. Given the counties they would serve, Derek and Kaci knew that their clientele would consist mainly of low-income, blue-collar workers and the unemployed. Also, most of the clientele had little to no higher education. Therefore, they decided the legal fees of SILS would be based on a sliding scale. This sliding scale was based upon the income of the client. The sliding scale would range from \$50 an hour on the lower end to \$250 an hour on the higher end of the scale. Unfortunately, all the clientele fell on the lower end of the pay scale. This caused their monthly revenue to average \$2,100 a month. Table 1 represents the average monthly budget of SILS.

TABLE 1
Southern Illinois Legal Service Average Monthly Budget

<i>Item</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Rent	\$200
Electric	\$175
Water/Sewer	\$45
Malpractice Insurance	\$96
Marketing	\$20
Automotive Costs	\$150
Equipment Costs	\$175
Postage	\$10
Phone/Internet	\$146
Wages	\$1,000
TOTAL	\$2,017

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

The Southern Illinois counties served by SILS constitute a relatively poor area of the state. Unemployment is high and many residents fall below the poverty line. Tables 2 and 3 contain data on the demographic and economic characteristics of the counties served by SILS. Jackson County, for example, has almost 28% of the population below the poverty line and low median income, despite a higher than state average high school graduation rate. It also has a low median age and unemployment rate. On the whole, these counties show lower than average median incomes and higher than average unemployment rate.

Table 2
Demographic Data, 2018-2019

County	Population	Median Age (years)	Percent over 65 years	Percent High School Graduates	Percent College Graduates
Franklin	38,701	42.9	20.5%	87.2%	16.7%
Hamilton	8,163	43.6	21.9%	90.2%	17.0%
Jackson	57,419	31.1	15.7%	92.1%	34.1%
Johnson	12,456	42.5	21.6%	83.1%	16.0%
Perry	21,174	41.8	18.6%	85.0%	12.5%
Pope	4,212	52.2	27.7%	86.6%	13.1%
Saline	23,906	42.0	20.1%	86.8%	19.2%
Union	16,841	43.5	21.4%	87.5%	21.7%
White	13,665	43.8	21.4%	89.7%	15.5%
Williamson	67,056	40.9	19.0%	90.9%	24.3%
Illinois	12,741,080	37.7	15.7%	88.6%	34.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2020; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020; USDA, 2021

Table 3
Economic Data, 2018-2019

County	Median Income (2018 dollars)	Unemployment Rate	Percent Below Poverty Level
Franklin	\$39,454	6.1%	19.9%
Hamilton	\$47,293	4.4%	13.9%
Jackson	\$36,008	4.6%	27.9%
Johnson	\$45,743	7.8%	13.9%
Perry	\$45,864	6.0%	14.7%
Pope	\$41,139	6.1%	12.7%
Saline	\$40,722	6.5%	20.6%
Union	\$46,716	6.5%	16.8%
White	\$46,279	4.3%	13.9%
Williamson	\$48,600	5.1%	15.2%
Illinois	\$61,229	4.3%	13.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2020; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020

Southern Illinois has one local TV station, WSIL-TV, located in Carterville, IL. WSIL-TV is a local ABC affiliate serving Southern Illinois, Southeast Missouri, and Western Kentucky, WSIL also has a morning news program that runs from 5:00 am to 8:00 am on Monday through Friday. WSIL-TV reaches approximately

322,000 homes (Local 2018). There also a few local newspapers; including The Southern Illinoisan, which has a circulation of approximately 22,000 (Audiences 2014).

THE DILEMMA

Operating funds are a major problem for SILS. Derek and Kaci are both recent law school graduates. Both passed the Illinois Bar Exam in October 2019. In law school, students are limited to the number of hours they can work and after graduation, graduates are strongly discouraged from working so they can study for the bar exam. This means that neither Derek nor Kaci have personal funds they could contribute to the finances of SILS.

To create SILS, Derek and Kaci were offered a building in which to locate their office, rent free for the first 3 months and \$200 a month thereafter. Their budget for advertising and promotion is limited to \$20 a month.

How best to utilize advertising and promotion funds was an ongoing debate between Derek and Kaci. Kaci is older and a traditionalist. She feels that using their funds to advertise via more traditional methods such as the radio or television would bring them more clients and allow them to expand their advertising and promotion plans. Derek is younger and has been around technology and working with the internet and social media for years. Derek feels that utilizing digital methods of advertising and promotion would be cheaper and allow them to reach a larger, more specific, target market. Derek and Kaci need help developing a marketing and advertising plan to effectively reach their potential customer base.

REFERENCES

- "Audiences". *Lee Enterprises*. Retrieved 2019-05-19 from:
https://lee.net/markets/audiences/pdf_f9eccc3c-26ed-11e4-ba80-0019bb2963f4.html.
- "Digital Advertising Fast Facts" October 2016. Retrieved 7/8/2020 from:
<https://www.iab.com/insights/digital-advertising-fast-facts/>
- Nielson. "*Local Television Market Universe Estimates*." Retrieved 5/12/2019 from:
https://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/us/en/public%20factsheets/tv/2018-19-dma-ranker.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3yswzalGXfUqkjshAeygTBU70JRyzwGE_fLrSdYG1peudS-Sm3xbFVpws
- The Southern Illinoisan. Dustin Duncan. "*The Digital Divide is an Economic Divide*." November 3, 2015. Retrieved 7/8/2020 from:
https://thesouthern.com/business/southern-business-journal/the-digital-divide-is-an-economic-divide/article_716eec7a-ab6d-584c-b0a6-8d71450f8190.html
- Interactive Advertising Bureau.
- WSIL. "Learn More About WSIL-TV." Retrieved 05/10/2019 from
<http://www.wsil-tv.com/story/30221833/learn-more-about-wsil-tv>
- US Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Local Area Unemployment Statistics." 2020. Accessed at: <http://data.bls.gov>.
- US Census Bureau. "American Fact Finder." 2019. Accessed at: <http://factfinder.census.gov>.
- US Department of Agriculture. "Economic Research Service." 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/county-level-data-sets/>