PERSPECTIVES ON PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MARKETING

MARKETING WITH TAX AND ESTATE PLANNING GUIDES

WHY AND HOW TO USE GUIDES AS CLIENT RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

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MARKETING WITH TAX AND ESTATE PLANNING GUIDES

A proven way to build relationships with business owners, professionals and other successful individuals is to show them how to minimize taxes, maximize wealth and achieve their financial goals. Sharing such information demonstrates your expertise, develops rapport and builds goodwill while educating recipients about tax and estate planning strategies and how you can help implement them. As a result, recipients will be more inclined to call on your firm for assistance.

A good way to share this information is with a tax or estate planning guide — like those offered by PDI Global — that gives an overview of helpful planning strategies. But simply presenting a guide or posting one on your website won't necessarily translate into more business. To this end, you'll need to proactively use the guides as marketing and business development tools, not just a means of presenting information. Here's what that involves.

FOCUS ON YOUR OBJECTIVES

In addition to providing clients and prospects with information they'll value, planning guides can help you build top-of-mind brand awareness and start dialogs with recipients that can lead to service requests. To achieve these marketing objectives, you need to:

- Think about whom you want to reach and what you want to accomplish with your guide,
- Make full use of your guide's customization options to highlight your brand, engage recipients and make the case for contacting your firm for assistance,
- Formulate a strategy for using and distributing the guide in both print and electronic formats, and
- Implement a follow-up plan to identify and take advantage of service opportunities.

Let's look more closely at each of these tasks.

IDENTIFY TARGETS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

Your choice of customization message, guide format, distribution channels and follow-up method will depend on what you want to do with your tax or estate planning guide. The key is to match format with audience, medium and purpose. Doing this will enable you to deliver information in the way your targets prefer, and that will help maximize impact and cost-effectiveness.

For example, if you plan to use your guide as a prospecting tool, or you want to educate clients about tax and estate planning, you'll generally find print copies and seminars more effective than an email or online guide. Prospects and important clients are generally more likely to look at and be impressed by something mailed or given to them by people they don't know than they are to open an email from a stranger. And seminars allow for a dialog that facilitates both learning and relationship development.

On the other hand, if you want to add content about tax or estate planning to your website to enhance SEO and position your firm as a thought leader, an online guide will be your best choice. And if you'd like to proactively but cost-effectively remind clients and referral sources of your tax or estate planning services, an email guide will be hard to beat.

For reasons like these, if you want to both maximize cost-effectiveness and achieve multiple marketing, client communication and business development goals, you'll generally need to use a combination of print and electronic guides. Limiting yourself to just one medium can keep you from getting your message across to everyone you would like to hear it, and that can result in missing out on opportunities to generate more business.

Keep in mind that relying solely on what may seem a more economical medium, such as email, may actually be less cost-effective than using a print or online guide, because you may then miss a large portion of your intended audience. If people don't see your guide, it won't matter how little it costs.

Also, the clearer you are about desired outcomes, the more likely you are to get them. If you want more market awareness, a mass-marketing approach using an email guide might work best. But if you want to develop or deepen client relationships, you might opt for a more targeted direct mail campaign — or even in-person calls — using a print guide.

BOOST YOUR GUIDE'S MARKETING POWER

To help build market awareness of your firm, you'll need at minimum to personalize the guide with your firm name and logo. PDI Global's electronic and print planning guides offer areas specifically designed for this purpose.

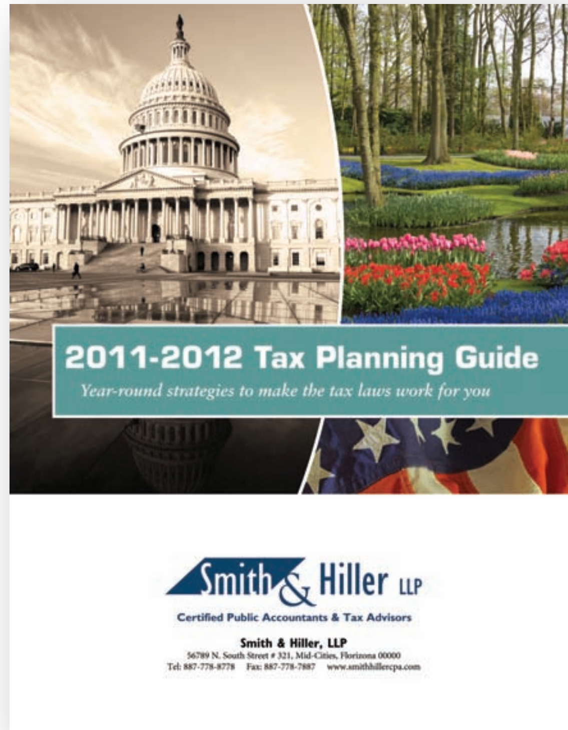
Our online *WebTaxGuide* and *WebEstateGuide* feature a splash page you can brand with your logo. Also, *Flex-E-TaxGuide* and *Flex-E-EstateGuide*, the email programs you can use to push out your online guides, enable you to add your firm's logo, contact information, partner photo, and a welcome message or other items to a sidebar on the program's HTML email template.

Our print *Tax Planning Guide* and *Selecting the Best Estate Planning Strategies* guide enable you to customize the inside and outside covers with:

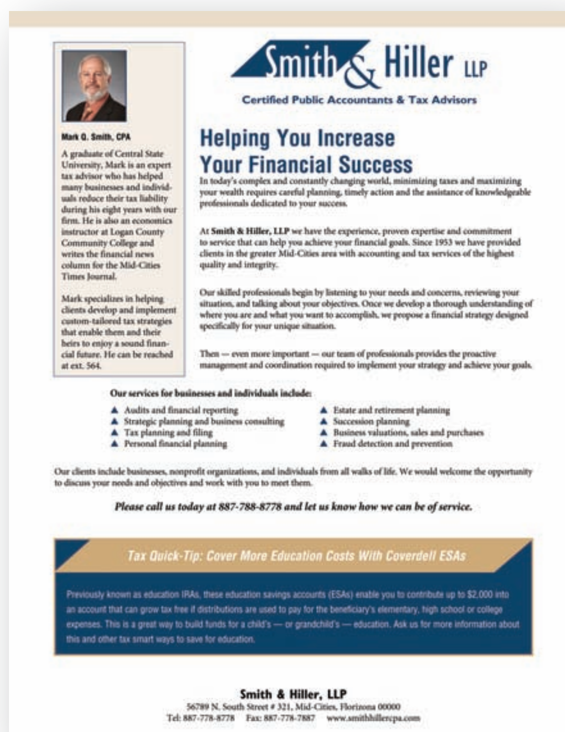
- A welcome letter (including a partner name and photo, if you like)
- Preface or introduction
- Description of your firm, partners and services
- Contact information and website address
- Additional information about a planning strategy
- An ad, seminar invitation or call to action
- Other copy or imagery

Adding such items can help grab attention, increase interest in your services and encourage reader contact. It also makes the guide distinctly yours.

Here are examples of how you might customize a print tax or estate planning guide to increase its effectiveness as a tool for building brand awareness and positioning your firm as a thought leader.



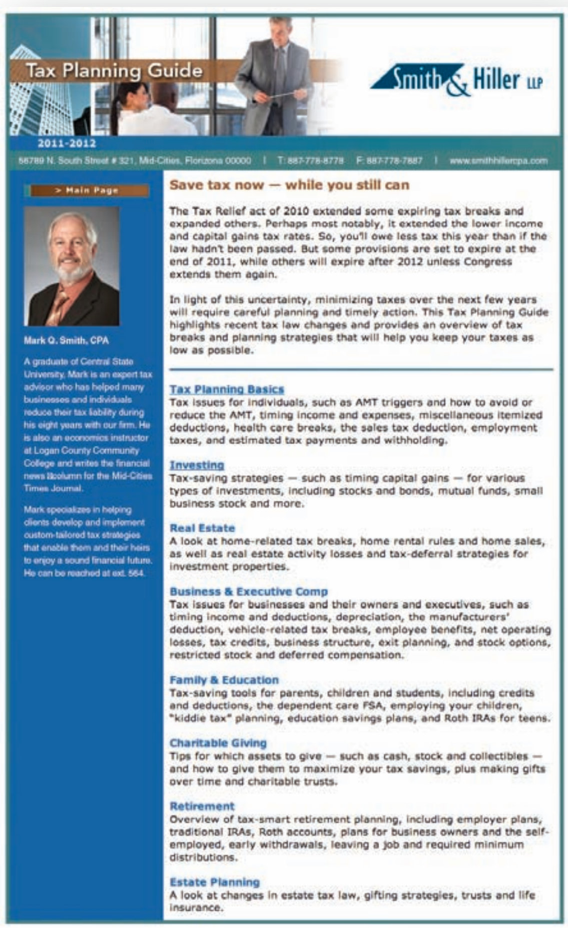
Brand the front cover with your logo and contact information.



Put a partner profile and information about your firm on the back cover.

And here's how you can boost the marketing power of the email *Flex-E-TaxGuide* and online *WebTaxGuide*. Note that the email template can also be used to periodically send out excerpts from the guide.

WebTaxGuide splash page branded with firm logo



Flex-E-TaxGuide customized with firm logo, contact information and partner profile

USE MULTIPLE DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

The more people who see your tax or estate planning guide, the more the guide will help you generate new business. Therefore, to reach as many people as possible, you'll want to use both print and electronic versions of the guide, so you can:

- Post the guide on your website and social media sites and email or tweet links to it,
- Hand it out at conferences, client meetings, seminars and sales calls,
- Mail or give the guide to clients as a thank-you or holiday gift, and
- Include it with your tax organizer as well as in proposals, information packets and direct mail campaigns.

When you mail print copies, you can increase impact by sending the guide in an envelope with a personalized cover letter. The letter might point to a section of the guide you think would be of particular interest to a recipient or contain a friendly note, such as "Thanks for your business."

If giving a print guide to all clients and prospects is beyond your budget, consider sending or presenting one to your top 100 clients and prospects. A print guide can make a strong favorable impression, and recipients will appreciate that you think enough of them to give them something that clearly costs more than an email. Also, give a copy to referral sources to remind them of your firm and inform them about ways you can be of service to them and their clients.

To get the most from your electronic guide, make sure that it's easy to find on your website. To this end, consider using a banner ad, large button or other design element on your home page to highlight the guide. Also, put links to the guide on appropriate pages of your site. For example, link to your tax guide on the page that describes your tax planning services and link to your estate planning guide from the pages that describe your estate planning or succession planning services.

Example of banner ad for online tax guide

WHY YOU NEED BOTH PRINT AND ELECTRONIC GUIDES

When deciding whether to use a print or electronic financial planning guide, consider the strengths and limitations of each. Also, keep in mind that cost-effectiveness depends on effectiveness, not just cost. So what may seem a more expensive format may be more cost-effective than a less expensive one because it generates more revenue.

Advantages of print. The three-dimensionality and tangibility of a print piece makes a stronger, more lasting impression on recipients. Also, the greater portability and longer "shelf life" of print increase the likelihood that recipients will read a print piece and perhaps pass it along to others. Plus, the spread format of a print guide allows the use of sidebars, charts and narrow-width columns that facilitate scanning, finding and reading information. And you can distribute print in a variety of ways, including in-person presentation.

Disadvantages of print. A print planning guide costs more to produce and mail than an electronic one. Also, a print guide cannot be updated without reprinting it or sending out a supplement with updated information.

Advantages of electronic. An online guide costs less than print to produce and distribute, and can be quickly and easily updated. Posting a guide on your website can greatly increase reach by enabling it to be seen by people who are not on your mailing list. Also, with an email program like *Flex-E-TaxGuide* or *Flex-E-EstateGuide*, you can track opens and clicks to determine readership and interests.

Disadvantages of electronic. Your intended audience won't see your guide if they don't visit your website or open an email about it. With email open rates low and declining, you may miss a large part of your target audience if you rely solely on electronic guides. Also, it can be more difficult to read a large amount of text online than in print format, so your intended readers may decide to not do that.

In addition, consider periodically sending out an email about your online guide to your intended audience. For example, you could excerpt part of the guide you think would be of special interest to certain clients or prospects and include a link back to the guide for more on the subject involved. Similarly, you could tweet a brief message, with a link to the guide, to your Twitter list, and you could periodically post a guide excerpt and link on your Facebook wall to reach those who "like" your firm.

On LinkedIn, you can include an invitation to visit your online tax guide, with the URL for it, in the Overview area at the top of your firm's profile page. But to give the guide more attention, you may want to create a description of it and include the URL for it on the Products & Services page for your firm.

Also, put an invitation to view your guide, with a link to it, in your email autosignature. And don't forget to mention your guide during phone calls or other conversations.

When deciding whether to use an electronic or print guide, keep in mind that each format has its pros and cons. Bottom line: You'll need both to maximize reach, impact and effectiveness. (See "Why you need both print and electronic guides" above.)

LEVERAGE YOUR GUIDE WITH SEMINARS

Presenting tax or estate planning seminars is a proven way to develop and strengthen client relationships. That's because seminars provide opportunities to demonstrate your expertise and talk face-to-face with participants, so they can come to know you, and you can learn about their goals and suggest ways to achieve them.

Seminars also give you an opportunity to present your tax or estate planning guide in person and point out sections where participants can learn more about the topics you talk about. The guide is a perfect take-away that participants are likely to look at again. And that will help keep your name top-of-mind for tax or estate planning services.

If you don't have time or other resources needed to put together a professional-looking seminar presentation, consider using PDI Global's *Tax Seminar-in-a-Box* or *Estate Planning Seminar-in-a-Box*. These ready-to-use PowerPoint® presentations — complete with speaker notes — enable you to conduct seminars quickly, easily and cost-effectively.

BE SURE TO FOLLOW UP

To get the most from your guide as a business development tool, you need to follow up with recipients and integrate it with other marketing communications or activities. Ideally, a member of your firm will call and ask recipients if they have any questions about the strategies discussed in the guide or other tax and estate planning matters. But if that's not possible, try to at least follow up with a letter or email with a similar message.

If you use only an online guide, periodically send an email about some aspect of tax or estate planning, with a link to your online guide, to push clients and other contacts to your site. Also, refer people to the guide in other emails or correspondence, and consider sending a postcard about it to key clients or prospects to make sure they're aware of your guide.

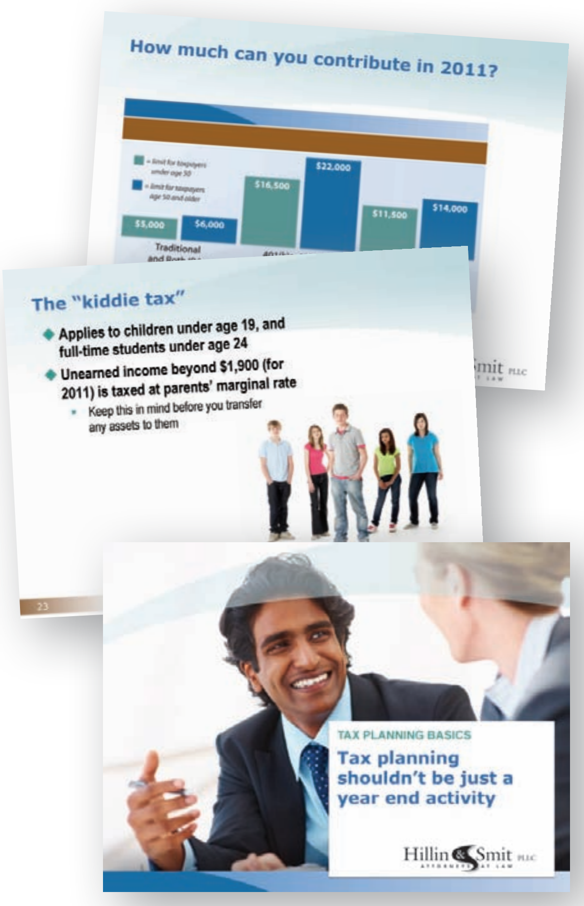
In addition, consider supplementing your guide with a newsletter on tax or estate planning topics. Because the main purpose of a financial planning guide is to provide an overview of strategies and techniques readers can use to achieve their objectives, there often isn't room to cover all relevant strategies for readers or to discuss a particular planning topic in depth. Also, sending or handing out a guide, or posting it on your website, is a one-time event. So recipients may forget about it if not reminded of it.

For these reasons, it's good to put guide recipients on the distribution list for a newsletter related to tax or estate planning, such as PDI Global's *Tax Impact* or *Insight on Estate Planning*. Regularly sending a newsletter of this type will reinforce brand awareness and remind recipients of the need for planning, as well as give them additional information about tax and estate planning subjects.

PUT GUIDES TO WORK FOR YOUR FIRM

The demand for tax and estate planning services is high and growing. But so is the competition. To get your share of this business, you need to market aggressively, so you stand out and position your firm as the place to go for these services. This is exactly what tax and estate planning guides are good at doing. So put them to work for your firm.

For more information about PDI Global's tax and estate planning guides and seminar presentations, visit www.pdiglobal.com. For questions about marketing with tax and estate planning guides, talk with your Thomson Reuters representative, call 800-227-0498 or email information@pdiglobal.com.



Tax Seminar-in-a-Box sample slides

Estate Planning Seminar-in-a-Box sample slides

ABOUT PDI GLOBAL

Since 1980, Chicago-based PDI Global, now part of Thomson Reuters, has been helping professional services firms achieve their marketing and business development goals. We provide integrated marketing and client communication solutions to accounting and consulting firms of all sizes throughout the country, including many Top 100 firms, as well as to law firms, banks and financial services providers. Our products include electronic and print newsletter niche marketing programs, tax and estate planning guides, seminar presentations, *Tax and Accounting Alerts*, an online *Content Store*, and custom editorial and collateral development services.

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