For Lawyers, the 10 Sure-Fire Ways to Keep Your Clients Happy

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KEY TAKEAWAY: Securing a new client is only the first phase of an ongoing process. It takes a concentrated effort to ensure clients remain loyal for life. This article explains ten sure-fire ways to keep your clients loyal and happy.

Securing a New Client is the Easy Part

While it can take a long time and considerable effort, securing a new client is only the first step in ongoing process. Once a new client has been wooed and won, the task becomes not only retention, with the goal of broadening and deepening the relationship, but also turning your clients into advocates for your services.

After all, research shows that it takes as much as seven times the time and money to acquire a new client as it does to get more work from an existing client. Once a client has made a commitment to you and your firm, be sure to avoid any mistakes that might jeopardize the health of the new relationship.

Often, lawyers and law firms lose business because they stop "courting" their clients and take them for granted. Here are ten sure-fire ways to keep your clients happy:

1. **Learn their preferences**. When your business development efforts have been a success and a client makes the decision to use you and your firm, take some time to find out how the client prefers to do business. What is the client's communication style – buckle right down to business or spend a little time on social pleasantries first? How do they prefer to communicate – email, telephone, extranet? What kind of documentation, in which format, do they require? Which billing format works best with their accounts payable system? By asking up front, you demonstrate concern and prevent misunderstandings down the road.

2. **Communicate at their preferred intervals**. Determine how often a new client wants to hear from you. Some want regular updates to pass along to their superiors; others prefer to hear from you only at pivotal junctures. You never know unless you ask. Do not veer from the agreed-upon matter or case strategy without discussing this deviation with the client. There may be a good business reason why the client prefers the original plan. Find out who should receive copies of which kinds of communications.

3. **Always be available**. When asked about the reasons they fire lawyers and law firms, general counsel consistently rank non-responsiveness at the top of the list. In fact, one of our attorneys – who has a $40 million book of business – ranks responsiveness as his number-one success criterion; he returns all calls within one hour. When a client contacts you, he or she must receive a timely response. Set the expectations up front. The response doesn't have to be the answer to the client's question; you can simply say that you are working on an answer. The response doesn't have to come from the lawyer; someone else familiar with the work can acknowledge the query and let the client know that a lawyer will be contacting them shortly.

4. **Never seem too busy.** Each client wants to be treated like he or she is your most valued and important client. When you are speaking with someone about work in progress, never act overwhelmed (even if you are) or indicate how busy you are with work for other clients. Focus fully on the client and the conversation at hand. If your clients think that you are currently operating at capacity, they will not ask you to do more work.

5. **Do not bill for everything**. You want your clients to think of you as a trusted adviser. This is never going to happen if a client imagines the clock running every time he or she is interacting with you. Do not bill for short phone calls. Spend time in off-site business and social situations. Drop by the client's office for an "off the clock" chat and tour.

6. **Say thank you**. When the work is done, thank the client for the opportunity – letting the client know that you are very interested in continuing the relationship. This requires a hand-written note, at the very least – something more personal and more substantial than an e-mail. An initial project provides the foundation on which to build a more enduring relationship.

7. **Conduct an end-of-matter interview**. When a matter is concluded, conduct an interview to discover what worked and what did not work, and use this information to continuously improve your relationship with the client. Few clients will actually call you to share their concerns; the interview format gives them permission to do this – and provides you with valuable information. Do not be defensive; just listen. Make sure that you take concrete steps to correct any shortcomings in the process and let the client know exactly how you did this. Thank them for their honesty.

8. **Keep in touch**. Cultivating a client relationship is a lot like dating – it takes a lot of courtship behavior over time to make a real impression. When you see an article a client might be interested in, put it in the mail with a note. When you have tickets to an interesting presentation in their field, invite them as your guest. If your firm is giving a seminar on a particular subject, ask them to co-present with you. If a breaking news story hits their industry, call to determine the impact on the client's business.

9. **Don't forget the personal**. In the upper reaches of the business development process, you will have a personal as well as a professional relationship with your life-long clients. Do nice things for them. Make notes about their families, community involvement and interests. Use these non-business-related aspects of their lives to keep in touch – without any expectation of business in return. These are the kinds of activities that earn you good clients – and good friends, as well.

10. **Make referrals to your clients**. You are investing a lot of time and effort in business development efforts; so are your clients. Always take the opportunity to refer work to them, making personal introductions, just as you hope that they would refer work to you. Always take the opportunity to bring the people in your network together for mutual benefit. Your clients will appreciate the effort, and you will develop emotional bonds with them that are almost impossible to sever.

Keeping Clients Happy is a Never-Ending Process

Many lawyers pay a lot of attention to potential clients during the courtship phase – when they are trying to woo new business. Once they are in the fold, the relationship becomes more business-like. This is a mistake. Continue to court your existing clients with the same intensity as new clients – or you will lose them.

Overview of Revenue Wise Services and Contact Information

FIRM OVERVIEW

Revenue Wise is a full service firm that specializes in helping law firms grow revenue. We use a combination of coaching, training, and consulting to help lawyers, practice groups, and ultimately, law firms become more successful. We can also license our materials, so your in-house staff can deliver the programs.

Past clients have averaged an 800% return on their investment in our programs.

We have been serving law firms for over 20 years and count some of the nation's top firms as our clients, including Orrick, Littler Mendelson, Fenwick & West, Keker & Van Nest, Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, Holland & Hart, Lindquist & Vennun and many other firms.

Our services are grouped under these areas:

- **Lawyers Services.** We help your lawyers become better business developers.
- **LinkedIn and Social Media Services.** Many consider our LinkedIn for Lawyers program the best available.
- **Practice & Industry Group Services.** We help your team leaders and members increase revenue, deepen client loyalty, and improve overall team performance.
- **Client Development Services.** We help your firm systematically develop and deepen client loyalty.
- **Firm Services.** We help law firms develop strategies, structures, and plans that measurably grow revenue.
- **Marketing Department Services.** We work with marketing leaders and their teams to optimize the performance of their departments.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about our services, please write or give us a call.

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