

Something to Talk About

This past weekend I was asked the question that every woman loves to hear: “Who does your hair?” I appreciate the flattery, but even more, I gain tremendous satisfaction in sharing hidden gems with my friends, family, and colleagues. From salons to restaurants to dentists, I have somehow become the “go-to” girl – one who has generated an awful lot of business for my favorite finds.

Law firm marketing is no different. When shopping for services – a new phone carrier, a new doctor, and in this case, a new lawyer – it’s the credible opinion of a friend or colleague that resonates, not a flashy marketing campaign in the form of some obnoxious internet pop-up. We are in an age when disingenuous marketing gimmicks strike so often that we have learned to not only accept, but rather expect, their presence. When I see companies wasting time and money on creative marketing strategies, force-feeding buzzwords everywhere they can, I can’t help but wonder why we don’t just keep it simple anymore. Whatever happened to word-of-mouth marketing?

Sure phone book advertisements, catchy TV commercials, and direct mail marketing campaigns accomplish the task of getting your firm’s name out to potential clients, but that should not be relied on as the determining factor in a client’s decision-making process. Your clientele need solid information about your firm. They need to hear testimonials. They need to hear it straight from the horse’s mouth.

So how do law firm administrators go about spreading the word? It starts not with potential clients, but your existing client base. So many marketing tactics focus on bringing in new business, but what about doing whatever it takes to retain your current clientele? After all, their loyalty to your firm is your best bet for bringing in new clients. And it’s a heck of a lot cheaper.

For starters, if you haven’t conducted a client satisfaction survey recently, now is the time. In order to retain your existing clients (and bring in new ones, as well), the firm has to learn what it is doing right – and wrong. As part of this survey, encourage your clients to refer others if they are happy with the services rendered. You can also use this as an opportunity to gather testimonials; leave a few blanks for your clients to write-in comments and opinions that you can use in your firm’s brochures.

While a client satisfaction survey is imperative in assessing your firm’s performance, it’s not enough for client retention. Giving back is a good rule of thumb for maintaining any relationship, so express your appreciation for their business throughout the year. Encourage attorneys and/or staff to write thank-you cards to clients for their business. Offer discounts to those who continue to pay on time, and start an incentive referral program.

The upcoming year will be tough. Budgets have been cut, leaving many law firm managers scrambling. When it comes to marketing campaigns, keep in mind that it’s not the gimmicks you need to invest in, but your current clientele. By continuing to provide good services and evaluating your clients’ satisfaction, retention and new business will follow. After all, good work speaks for itself. Just ask; I’d be happy to provide a referral. ✱



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