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LEGAL MARKETING

Marketing With Personal Touches That Cost Next to Nothing

BY STACY WEST CLARK

I was told three stories this month by different lawyers that I must share with you. Each tale made me realize that some very small gestures—made by lawyers—can have a profound impact on their clients. At a time when marketing budgets are stressed, lawyers should view these stories as a kind of roadmap into what they could be doing to strengthen bonds with clients at a minimal cost. Two of the stories involve no out-of-pocket expense—at all. All three stories involve acts of kindness done by the lawyers to their clients—which have now resulted in these same lawyers getting more work and referrals from these happy clients.

The first tale is from a family lawyer. She said that she was retained by a client recently and she did two things she had never done before. Both cost nothing and took less than 10 minutes of her time. But the thanks, gratitude and ultimately, referrals she received from her client were remarkable. What had she done? First, she called the client the day after being retained to let the client know that she had started work on her case and would do everything in her power to help her. One week later, she called the client again just to check in to see how she was doing—off the clock—to let her know the status of her case and thank her for the privilege of being asked to help. The client responded to these two phone calls by telling “all of her friends” how thoughtful and personal her lawyer was. And yes, she gave her name and contact information out many times.

The second story came from a personal injury lawyer. As you know, anytime an individual hires a lawyer, it is because they are going into a battle. No matter how long the case drags on, it does take its toll on your client. I have seen lawyers become “part therapist” and “part new best friend” to their clients because of the stress and emotional involvement the case can involve. So, in the case of this personal injury lawyer, he and his client had been through a two-year medical malpractice case.



Over that period, the client had met in person with the lawyer dozens of times. When the matter concluded with a favorable settlement, rather than invite the client in to hand-deliver the check,

the lawyer sent it via certified mail. The client received the check and was furious. Why? Because in the client’s mind, (and that’s the only mind that matters), he and his lawyer had formed a bond over the case. He wanted to celebrate the outcome with his lawyer in person. He was in fact hurt by the terse, impersonal delivery of the check. Thank goodness, the client took the time to tell the lawyer why he was so upset with him. The lawyer told me he has never repeated the same mistake since. Now, he goes overboard, with a hug and even some cake when he hands his clients their awards in person. He attributes the rise in referrals from clients to this behavior.

The third tale is from a mergers and acquisitions lawyer at an Am Law 100 firm. This lawyer has many millions in business from Fortune 100 companies. His work comes from many different people within these organizations. You would think that he would maintain strict business relationships with these clients—engaging in necessary entertaining from time to time. However, this lawyer did something I do not hear of very often. When two of his clients’ fathers died, he got on a plane and train to attend the funerals. He missed a day of work in each case to do so. In both instances, the clients were very touched by his actions. Not only do they continue to frequently mention it, but they have stuck with the lawyer for years—even when there was substantial pressure to use a much less expensive firm.

There are other personal touches that you can do to create such good will that will cause your clients to be vocal ambassadors for your brand. A quick list includes:

- Sending them a handwritten note to celebrate something good in their life, including

a birthday or anniversary. Note I deliberately did not say “send an email.” Free Google alerts can help bring you news about your clients’ professional and personal lives so you can congratulate them.

- Offering to sit in for free on a board meeting if it might be of some help.
- Writing a letter for their high school senior who is hoping to go to your alma mater.
- Keeping on top of legislation that may affect their business/personal life and sending them updates regularly.
- Complimenting your client to his or her direct report at work. Acknowledge his or her effort and contribution and then let the client know you have done so.
- Support charities that are important to your client vocally and visibly and financially if you can.
- Introduce them to your contacts that can make something in their professional or personal life better.
- Help them solve a problem on a nonlegal matter: search for new office space, admission to a club, etc.

With all that is happening in our world, this is a terrific time to be kind and thoughtful, and these actions will lead to enhanced client relationships. Get started. I am rooting for you. •

Stacy West Clark has been helping lawyers and law firms grow their revenues for more than 20 years. She is a former attorney with Morgan, Lewis & Bockius and was the firm’s first marketing director. She is president of Stacy Clark Marketing, www.stacyclarkmarketing.com, a firm that helps law firms and lawyers increase profits, expand client relationships, get more referrals and improve name recognition.

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