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LEGAL MARKETING

What Free Things Should You Be Doing for Your Clients?

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Special to the Legal

We all know now that your invoice is likely the most read piece of paper or email that your corporate client receives, and I am sure your clients are delighted beyond words to receive your invoices, right? What? Not true? Well, this could be the case if you are giving your clients value-added services that you actually list on the invoice with the word “gratis” next to each entry. Believe it or not, doing this will not detract from your revenues, but rather, enhance them.

So what kinds of things should you be doing “off-the-clock”? Here is Part 1 of my suggested action items list (in no particular order, because they all are important):

- Visit your clients. Take a tour of their business. Meet their top executives. Offer to sit in on meetings.



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Learn how they make money. Find out what kinds of issues are “keeping them up at night” so you can help improve the situation. Can you imagine a company hosting its lawyer for several days and teaching him or her everything about their business? Why would the company ever go to another law firm after that? Make this a standard activity in your practice.

- Offer, and then execute, free on-site training programs managers or all employees on preventative legal topics—to show the client

that you are actually looking out for them to avoid problems from ever arising.

- Offer to, and then, sit in on board meetings free of charge.

- Nominate them for an award that means something in their world.

- Write an article and give the client “byline credit.” But remember, you do all the work.

- Ask the client for feedback on your services and then implement any requested changes and expeditiously let them know you have done so.

- Use their services yourself and introduce your staff to their products/services when possible. Introduce them to contacts that can help them. Look for ways to promote the company/client in your own life.

- Support your client’s favorite charity—vocally, visibly and, if possible, financially. If you cannot write a check, offer sweat equity

and roll up your sleeves and participate in some way.

- Tell your client quick questions, emails and calls are nonbillable events. Show these write-offs on the bill. Do not assume your client will remember you did this.

- Hold “free office hours” at the client’s place of business where managers can come and ask questions on compliance, new legislation or other important matters you could conceivably help with.

- Consider offering to review and comment on something of the client’s (a contract, policy manual, etc.) for free. Do an audit.

- Help them solve a problem on a nonlegal matter: for example, search for new office space, find a better SEO company, change to a lower-cost phone service provider, or seek admission to a private club. Hand in hand with this is to find ways to save the client money—on any front.

- Ask to attend a trade/industry association meeting that the client goes to, to learn more about their business’s challenges and hot topics.

- Develop client teams to make sure everyone in your firm who is servicing the client is on the same page about what they want out of the relationship and how they want to be treated. Invite the client to participate regularly in these team meetings.

- Provide personalized FAQs, checklists and forms to the client to make them more efficient and effective.

- Learn about the client’s competition by reading their website (especially their press releases), following them with Google Alerts, reading

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their social media pages and more. Present them with this information along with recommendations for success.

- If you have been meeting with other GCs, tell your client what you are seeing them doing well in their own organizations. In-house lawyers are always looking for ways to be leaner and more effective to their client base too. Your insights could be very helpful to them.

- Stay in touch when a matter ends. Call to check in—for free—a month or so after, or take them to lunch or dinner. Show them you are serious about being a business partner now and in the future and aim to keep their priorities on your mind.

- Track legislation on the local, state and federal level that may affect them professionally or personally in

the future and let them know that you are doing so off the clock.

- Thank them often for the privilege of being able to represent them. Remember they have lots of choices.

In doing any or all of these ideas, you will be strengthening your bond with your client and probably doing things that their other legal providers are not. Value-added services are a key differentiating factor for law firms. When there are choices, clients will go with the law firms that are making them actually “look and feel better.”

Now, stay tuned for Part 2 of this list. And still to come after that, a “value-added” list if your client is an individual and not a business. Get a good night’s rest. We have a lot to do. •