

The Legal Intelligencer

THE OLDEST LAW JOURNAL IN THE UNITED STATES 1843-2016

PHILADELPHIA, TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2016

VOL 253 • NO. 100

An **ALM** Publication

LEGAL MARKETING

What the Phillie Phanatic Taught Me About Legal Marketing

BY STACY WEST CLARK

Special to the Legal

Recently, I attended a lunchtime retreat offered by DillonMarcus, Executive Retreats on “How to Create Loyal, Loving Fans for Life,” which I heartily recommend you attend. The speakers were Evan Marcus and Tom Burgoyne, otherwise known as the Phillie Phanatic’s “best friends” for the past 26 years. Together they have written a soon-to-be-published book that has a working title of “Pheel the Love.”

Their message and their mission is simple. Love your clients. Love the people who work for you. It is a message that must be shared with law firms in these somewhat harsh, competitive times of 2016. As Marcus and Burgoyne said, “The stats are clear: Law firms who are able to create loyal, loving fans (otherwise known as clients), outperform those that don’t by almost 2-1.”

Here’s their core premise: Wouldn’t you want your clients to love you and your firm with the



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same fervor and dedication they have for the Phanatic?

So how do you create “loving and loyal clients”? Marcus and Burgoyne presented seven loyalty “FUNDamentals.” These principles will help you translate the Phanatic’s magic to your firm. Each FUNDamental was shared with real business relevance and accompanied by an entertaining backstage Phillie Phanatic story shared by Burgoyne:

1. The big smooch: Love them first. Do everything you can to make your clients feel special and cared for.

2. See through your client’s camera: Make every encounter count—what matters most to them.

3. Give them the belly womp: How can you make your engagements more pleasurable, memorable and even fun for your clients?

4. Avoid the whammy: Put the people in the right positions and treat them right.

5. Duct tape and hot dogs: Be committed to operational excellence. Do the right things right.

6. The ballpark and beyond: Proactively bridge the divide between you and your clients.

7. The seventh-inning celebration: Be optimistic no matter what the score.

The Phanatic lives by each of these principles and they produce powerful results. People don’t just say they “like” the Phanatic—they say they love the Phanatic. Marcus and Burgoyne encourage any successful law firm to place these principles at the center of its marketing strategy and culture. To be fully effective, it has to be genuine. You cannot achieve this love status unless your law firm

has a commitment to operational excellence.

So where should your firm start? Begin by loving your employees. You'll avoid the whammy of disengaged employees if you "see" them and treat them right. Loyal employees will be good to your clients. Next, in true Phanatic style, give the love to your clients first as it will almost always foster love and loyalty in return.

Believe it or not, I think law firms should use the word love more in their branding activities and collateral marketing materials—because we really love our clients.

What does "love" feel like in our industry? First, I think it means making sure the client knows that their matter is the most important one on your desk—that means being uber accessible when you are needed, that you do give their matter your all and do not tell the client "you are swamped with work." (Yes, I have heard lawyers say this.) Second, it means really understanding how your client will measure your success, so you need to have that conversation with them in the beginning of the representation. Third, it involves having conversations with the client to understand their preferences on communication (email or snail mail), frequency of communications (do they want to

see every document) and whether they wish to be a part of the strategy sessions involving the case. Fourth, it involves, as Marcus and Burgoyne pointed out, being diligent about putting people in the right positions and teaching them about great service. The Phillie Phanatic is loved because it makes people smile. What is your firm doing to make your clients smile? Consider adding "human" touches that make a personal connection.

One of the most important things you should be focusing on is the "experience of being your client." How do you make clients feel special and loved from the moment the phone is answered, an email returned, a website visited or when they've walked through the door? How do you and your entire staff treat the client?

Law firms need to examine this perhaps with third-party audits.

I have conducted several client audits for area firms and I was astounded to see how many small changes could be made to improve the entire client experience at several law firms. They included:

- Educating the receptionist on all aspects of the firm's practice and how to handle different kinds of potential-client inquiries. In this way, he or she could truly be helpful to the client.
- Ensuring that secretaries or assistants were introduced at the first meeting to the client with a great handshake.
- Having each member of the client's team educated on the client's business.
- Asking people to smile more—especially when they are on the phone.

- Checking everyone's voice mail to make sure that there is an option to get out of the voice mail and that too many rings do not go by without the voice mail picking up.

- Ensuring that the physical space of your firm is top quality from the client's perspective—including the bathrooms.

- Providing value-added services that do not show up on the invoice that inure to the client's financial and legal well-being.

- Serving clients beverages in glasses as opposed to paper cups.

- Holding off-the-clock, in-person and on-site meetings with the client to assess their satisfaction with your services and to tour their facility and answer questions about the case.

- Checking the language used on "after-hours messages." I have had numerous clients recently delete messages that say, "You have reached us after 5:30 p.m. The office is now closed."

Believe it or not, I think law firms should use the word love more in their branding activities and collateral marketing materials—because we really love our clients. Marcus and Burgoyne mentioned that in the book "Conscious Capitalism," written by John Mackey, the co-founder and co-CEO of Whole Foods Market, the word "love" appeared in the book over 140 times. When asked about this, Mackey said, if he wrote the book again, he would have used the word "love" more. •