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THE VOICE OF THE CLIENT

Lateral Hiring And Integration

What About Integrating The Client?

By **Beth Cuzzone**

Yes, another article about lateral hiring. The continuing trend is invading our industry and, therefore, articles in our trade publications. Is the trend as prevalent as we read about every day? Yes, according to ALM's October 2012 report titled "Thinking Like Your Client: Strategic Planning in Law Firms." The top three upcoming business strategies according to law firm leaders who participated in the research include: 1) Growing the firm; 2) Talent and acquisition and retention; and 3) Improving profitability.

The report also indicates that 96% of the participating law firms have prioritized "acquiring laterals" as part of growth plans in the next two years. Most, if not all, law firms have a process, checklist and protocols to integrate laterals joining our firms. BUT, what about integrating the client?

Have we really created our processes with the client at the

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Asking the Right Questions

What You Need to Know to Sell Your Legal Services

By **Sheryl A. Odentz**

Research shows that the most successful business generators ask a lot of questions, particularly at the beginning of the sales or business development cycle. Good questions build rapport and help to determine a prospect's needs, problems, motivations, rationale, choices, and objectives. Plus, successful business generators tend to ask questions in particular sequence. This sounds fairly simple, but it takes consistent work and strong skills to become effective at using this approach to successfully generate new business.

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

Background Questions are used to establish the facts about the prospect's situation. They are the first level of questions that you ask. They are important, but you want to limit them, particularly with more senior-level prospects. Research shows that the higher up your prospect is in an organization, the less likely he/she will like answering Background Questions. Their time is very valuable, so the more information you can gather prior to the meeting, the better. Look to annual reports and articles, and try to find out what other public and relevant information that you can about the company and prospect. Background Questions can lead smoothly and naturally to a discussion of potential problems.

When asking Background Questions, you will want to listen for implied or explicit needs. Implied needs are statements about a prospect's problems, difficulties and dissatisfactions. A typical example of an implied need may start with "I'm unhappy with ..." or "I'm worried that ...". On the other hand, explicit needs state the prospect's wishes. For instance, "I am looking for a full-service firm." Explicit needs are the key drivers of purchasing decisions.

Sample Background Questions

- What are the biggest challenges that you face?
- How do you feel the recession has impacted your business?

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Questions

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- Who is your typical customer/client?
- How is your legal department organized?
- What type of legal work do you use outside counsel for?
- What are the current trends in your market/industry?
- How long have you been in business?
- What is happening in your market/industry?
- What are your top priorities over the next six months?
- Describe your experience working with outside counsel. What has worked well? What has been a challenge?

PROBLEM-SOLVING QUESTIONS

Problem-Solving Questions are used to explore problems, difficulties, and dissatisfactions with an existing situation. These questions are asked after you have asked your Background Questions. Listen for implied or explicit needs.

Sample Problem-Solving Questions

- How would you like to see your current counsel improved?
- Where do you anticipate your current counsel will not be able to meet your needs as your business grows?
- It sounds like you're concerned about [problem]. Could you please tell me more about ... ?
- How important is it to solve this problem and by when?
- What is happening in your business that necessitates that expertise?

CONSEQUENCE QUESTIONS

Consequence Questions take a prospect's problems (*i.e.*, a need that

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is not being satisfied) and explore their implications or effects. These questions are especially effective when you are selling to a decision-maker whose success in his/her organization depends upon his/her ability to see beyond the immediate problem and to comprehend its eventual consequences. Consequence Questions help the prospect understand a problem's seriousness or urgency so that it becomes large enough to justify an immediate and significant action (such as retention of outside counsel or making a firm change) or help the prospect see a link to another potential problem. Consequence Questions create a stronger sense of need before you introduce a possible solution. These questions can transform implicit needs into explicit needs. A prospect may be engaging in denial or avoidance behavior. Such questions force the prospect to acknowledge pain and, therefore, to appreciate the need for treatment.

Sample Consequence Questions

- How often does that cause ... ?
- What does that result in ... ?
- Does that ever lead to ... ?
- What effect does that have on ... ?
- What have you done so far to protect your position?
- It sounds like you do not feel like you are getting the best terms. How has that translated into lost dollars, lost opportunities?
- How is this problem affecting your organization and you personally?
- If you did nothing, how would that impact your organization and you personally?

OUTCOME QUESTIONS

Outcome Questions focus on what outcomes the prospect would find acceptable. They prompt the prospect to tell you the benefit that your solution could offer rather than your being forced to explain it. Selling is not about convincing a prospect but, rather, about creating the right conditions for the prospect to talk him/herself into acceptance. Outcome Questions also reduce objections. Consequence Questions are often the mirror image of Outcome Questions.

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How to Close New Business

By Larry Bodine

There is a tried and true method to seal the deal with a new client — an area that many lawyers have trouble with. Attorneys are typically very good at describing their skills and re-counting problems they have solved for other clients, but they struggle with asking for the business.

In sales, this is known as “the close,” which is actually the easiest step in the sales process, so long as you have set up the foundation that leads up to it. There are five steps:

1. Research.
2. Connect.
3. Meet.
4. Establish Rapport.
5. Follow up.

Bear in mind that business development is just like dating. If a guy were to ask a gal to go out, he wouldn't ask her to get married on the first date. There's usually a lot of getting-to-know-you and courtship involved, and then eventually, if it works out, you get to the close. And that's where we all want to be.

RESEARCH

Chances are you already know the decision-makers (aka prospects) who can retain you. The purpose of your research is to learn everything you can about prospects so you can get in front of them. The one thing that's really going to pay off for you is to learn their industry. Figure out whether a decision-maker's company is the market leader or the market laggard. What's going on in the industry? Is it in a recession? Is it doing well? Keep looking until you find a business problem that the decision-maker is currently facing.

The next thing to find out is what organizations they belong to. What

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are the circles that they travel in? The point is to find a way to put yourself into that circle. Then re-search further and find out what the two of you have in common: Did you go to the same school? Are you from the same part of the country? Do you know the same people? The next step is to discover someone who can make an introduction for you. The more you know about the decision-maker, the easier it will be to be to get in front of them.

CONNECTING

How do you connect with the decision-makers? Frankly, the very best way is to talk to the people that you already know the best, and that's your own clients. The most successful business developers visit their clients, go to their stores and explore their factories. Clients love it when a lawyer takes an interest in their business, and on-site visits also create an opportunity to build your practice by asking for three things:

1. *The first thing is a recommendation.* When your client gets a call from a GC, you want her to recommend you. This works with the way GCs search for lawyer: They will draw up a short list and then call other GCs. Research by the BTI Consulting Group found that a client recommendation is two and a half times more potent than anything else you can do in business development. The reason is that once a client recommends you, the GC's search for a lawyer has concluded. That's all they needed to hear. They got a live recommendation from somebody who's working with you.

2. *Second, ask for an introduction.* If you have a relationship with a client in which you are a personal or a trusted business adviser, ask the client to introduce you to someone who is in the same industry. The client will not be surprised by this request. He will already know that success in business comes from giving and asking for introductions. If you have a good relationship with the client, he will be more than happy to make the connection.

3. *Ask if there is a problem you can solve for the client.* Whenever you're in the office of a client, you should find out what's going on, and see if there isn't a new file that you can pick up.

MEETING

Once you have researched your target person, identified a problem he or she faces and gotten an introduction, it's time to get face-to-face. Your aim is to get past the stage of exchanging e-mails to an in-person meeting as quickly as possible.

The purpose of meeting somebody is to see if you can cultivate a relationship with them. It is not to make a pitch. Nobody likes to be pitched. Instead, approach the meeting as an interview. You are trying to determine what business problem the other person has that you can solve with your focused legal services.

Leave a firm brochure behind and instead prepare five intelligent questions for the other person. Think of the meeting as a friendly deposition, where you are gathering more information about the prospective client and his or her business. This is an opportunity to probe deeper into the issues you learned in your research.

The idea is to get the other person talking: If the other person is talking, you are selling. The person you are courting should do more than half of the talking. Your role is to listen to what they have to say so that you can understand the other person better.

A crucial point to listen for in the conversation is a sense of urgency. Clients want to solve only problems that they consider to be urgent.

So, let's say you are talking to the owner of a chain of health clubs, and one of their members hurt himself on an exercise bike. For example, it might go like this:

Q: “One of your members was hurt. How has that affected you?”

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Sales Speak

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A: “Well, it’s affected me a lot. I have to talk to the home office now. They want to know why we put the wrong pedals on. This has just taken over my life.”

Q: “What bothers you most about it?”

A: “We were just trying to do the right thing. We installed these bikes to help people get fit. Who knew that there were different pedals? We just sort of took the parts that came with the bike, and we were just trying to do the right thing.”

Q: “Why is it important that you solve this problem now?”

A: “As it turns out, we’ve got a lot of members, and we’ve got these pedals on bikes all over the country, and chances are, there are a lot of other people who could get hurt. We’ve got to nip this in the bud. We just can’t sit on this thing.”

Q: “What would happen if you didn’t do anything?”

A: “I can tell you what happened, because it’s happened before. They’d all get together. They’d form a class action and they’d file suit against us, and we’d be tied up in court for years.”

As you can see, just by asking questions that are probing for a sense of urgency, you have prompted the other person to tell you why it’s so important to bring you in on the matter right now. By answering your questions, the other person has sold himself on retaining you.

FOLLOWING UP

Remember the dating analogy. You’re not going to get the answer to every question on the first date. In the first meeting, you should basically seek to establish some rapport. And yes, you probably won’t go into that much depth on the first meeting. But you never know. You just might.

Most new business is won by persistence over time. After you’ve spoken to a potential client, keep a list of what I call value-added ideas. By value, I mean it solves a business problem of the client with legal ser-

vices. These ideas will be your talking points when you see the other person again.

Follow up with a thank-you letter. Send helpful e-mails with news items from industry publications. Make an occasional call to chat about people in the industry. But most importantly, make it a point to turn up at the same meetings the other person does. Continue your research and learn what industry associations the other person goes to. Go to the same presentations and programs. Set dates for future meetings.

Once the other person has gotten to know you and is convinced that you are really interested in him or her, there will be a meeting where the other person has something urgent to discuss. It will be something that bothers them. It will affect their job and be important to solve it now. That will be the moment when you close the client by simply saying, “I can help you with that.”



Questions

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Sample Scenario and Outcome Questions

You are an experienced entertainment attorney. You are speaking to a prospect who is a famous pop singer. She feels that her current attorney may not be getting her the most favorable terms in her contracts, but she does not know what those are because the terms in artists’ contracts are not publicly reported and are subject to confidentiality requirements.

On the other hand, your firm may have represented those compa-

nies or peer artists in similar contracts and, therefore, know what terms they have agreed to. Without breaching confidentiality, the entertainment company and you know what those terms are so the companies could not reject a position you have gotten on the basis that is not “market.”

One way to explore the problem would be to ask as a Consequence Question like, “Do you feel that your current attorney is knowledgeable about the terms your peer singers are getting in their contracts?” or “Which of your peers has your current attorney represented in similar negotiations?” An Outcome Ques-

tion may sound like, “How could our deep experience working with the big entertainment companies (or peer artists) help you to achieve more favorable terms?”

CONCLUSION

In summary, excellent questions asked at the appropriate times build rapport and help you to focus your solution. They also help you to keep your prospect involved in the business development process. Try some of these techniques at your next business development meeting and see what results they yield.



Voice of the Client

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center? According to Daniel Weintraub, Managing Director and General Counsel of Audax Group, “Law firms do not realize the burden a change in law firms creates for us, the client. There is little upside for me, the client, when a lawyer moves to a new firm.”

For illustration purposes, he explains, “assuming one of my outside lawyers is moving from one good firm to another good firm, I then have a whole new set of administrative — never mind substantive — matters to learn, such as telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, people and billing cycles, just to name a few. Things as small as what expenses are client-chargeable vary from

firm to firm” comments Weintraub. To guide law firms moving forward, Weintraub has a few suggestions to help create a bridge from an attorney’s lateral move to client service.

HOW TO HELP THE CLIENT

Stop using the “perfect pitch.” Weintraub cautions against calling clients and using what he calls the

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Spring Awakening

A Preview of Media and Communications Best Practices

By Michelle Samuels

Spring is in the air and, whether you experienced a long and snowy winter or a mild one, it is a wonderful, much-welcomed change from the winter doldrums.

As your law firm heads into a busy and active spring season, here are three topical issues that can remind us of how we can add some rejuvenation and much-welcomed change into our legal marketing best practices.

SPRING CLEAN YOUR LAW FIRM'S 'ONLINE HOUSE'

According to Wikipedia, the origins of spring cleaning date back to Norouz, the Persian new year, which falls on the first day of spring each year and involves the practice of *khooneh tekouni*, meaning "shaking the house," just before the new year.

Spring is a great time to give your law firm's "online house" — its website — a rejuvenating cleaning as well. To start, evaluate your website's SEO strategy and optimization efforts. Since SEO is a constantly evolving field, your goals and strategy behind optimization efforts from last year or the year before may now be outdated. For example, until now, keyword usage has been the primary driver in SEO optimization to ensure higher Google page rankings, but recent changes to Google Panda, a tool incorporated into Google's search algorithm to promote high-quality original content sites over low-content sites, have changed that.

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The Google Panda algorithm now emphasizes sites with original and regularly updated content over sites with lots of links, keywords and the same repetitive information on them. Keyword usage will still be a factor in obtaining higher Google ranking search results, but maintaining original, continuously updated content and showing engagement through your site, such as social media and regular blog posts, will be increasingly important to keeping your site highly ranked in search results.

In addition, many of the same tools you already use to help with your firm website's keyword research and link building can also be repurposed to help content marketing efforts without having to create all-new content.

WHAT A NEW POPE CAN TEACH US ABOUT INCREMENTAL CHANGE

The Roman Catholic Church's recent selection of Archbishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio, now known as Pope Francis, has been widely lauded by Catholics and non-Catholics throughout the world. As the first Latin American and Jesuit pope, Francis is known for his humility and his advocacy for the poor in his native country of Argentina. In recent years, while the church has faced scandals and increased opposition from many for its seemingly out-of-touch stance in today's modern, fast-moving world, many hope this spring's selection of Pope Francis will take the church in a refreshing new direction.

Perhaps the best indicator of that new direction so far are the simple yet effective gestures he showed the world within his first 24 hours as Pope — making a special trip to pay his bill at the hotel where he stayed before he was elected, rejecting the papal limousine, proactively engaging in friendly banter with journalists, engaging with a crowd.

Likewise, whether your law firm's brand is relatively unknown or well-known, encouraging change in its marketing efforts through incremental steps is a sound strategy. If your

firm fears social media, focus on LinkedIn — the most practical social media tool for law firms — and engage some active LinkedIn users within the firm to help you rally support of a 100% participation rate. If you are tasked with writing LinkedIn bios for attorneys, use this thorough checklist as a starting point.

Incorporate Gradual Change Into a Media Outreach Strategy

If some of the firm's senior partners fear speaking with reporters, start by identifying younger partners who can do so, covering their practice areas and serving as examples for how effective media outreach can be. By rallying support one attorney or one group at a time, you will gain marketing advocates within the firm who can help you affect more widespread change in the long run.

Get Ahead of the Game on Regulatory Changes Affecting Your Firm's Clients

With many federal agency and White House vacancies to fill in his second term, President Obama has spent significant time this spring nominating individuals whose work will have a direct impact on how businesses comply with the law. For instance, a high-profile nominee, Gina McCarthy, proposed administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), will face a huge number of regulatory decisions in next few years, many required under the Clean Air Act.

Whether or not your law firm's clients will be forced to comply with rules under the SEC, EPA, or another agency expecting new rule-making, a lot is up in the air and firm clients will surely have questions about how this will affect their business. Use these regulatory changes as a way to showcase your firm's knowledge and commitment to keeping its clients informed and updated. Work with select attorneys to identify and research a key issue of concern to many firm clients when it first comes out (before all of your law firm's competitors start talking about it).

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How to Write in the ‘e-Age’

By Steven Stark

Though we tend to think that good writing never changes, writing in many parts of the legal and business worlds has probably changed more in the last decade than in any comparable period over the last five centuries. Those who fail to adapt will pay the consequences.

TECHNOLOGY WON’T GO AWAY

Major technological changes transform not only our methods of communication, but their style as well. “We shape our tools and then our tools shape us,” wrote the media theorist Marshall McLuhan a generation ago. The invention of the printing press altered not only the dissemination of information, it changed the way people spoke and the way they wrote — and there were constant complaints about it then, just like now.

In our time, the recent development of computers, the Internet, and then smart phones (and all their manifestations such as the iPad and other tablets) has begun to do much the same thing. It’s undeniable that writing within the office and for clients is dramatically different than it was a decade ago. Yet lawyers have done little to adapt to this brave new world.

Writing effective e-mails and shorter memos are skills very much at odds with the tools we acquire in school — where the goal is usually to be expansive and detailed as we display our knowledge in all its minutiae. Yet in an age in which people no longer read linearly from beginning to end and also read with far less absorption, continuing to use this method is a ticket to unreadability.

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CHANGES IN WRITING

In my communication workshops, we spend a lot of time focusing on the writing of ad copy, courtesy of some of the old-time greats of the print age such as David Ogilvie and Bill Bernbach. The goal isn’t to turn students into Don Drapers — as interesting as that might be — but to learn what makes persuasive writing tick. Lawyers who learn what makes a great advertising slogan are not only mastering the intricacies of marketing. They’re also acquiring better advocacy skills in litigation since many of the same principles apply there too. It’s probably a mistake to cite the O.J. Simpson criminal trial as a good example of anything, but Johnnie Cochran and Barry Scheck used “slogans” to great advantage. Long after the trial ended, the jurors were telling the press, “If it doesn’t fit, you must acquit.”

In my workshops, we also focus on the intricacies of Google Maps and even Wikipedia. Substantive merits aside, these sites have mastered many of the tools lawyers need in order to communicate better in the e-age. Think about some of the ways in which Google Maps (or MapQuest) organize information:

- They use the second person, which in turn, moves the writer in the direction of writing simpler prose because we sound more conversational when we use the second person;
- They provide visual illustrations;
- They are written as a numbered list, not an essay.

That last point is key. Throughout our legal careers, we’re socialized into always writing essays. Briefs, memos, and even opinions today are simply different takes on the essay format. But an essay is often one of the least effective ways to convey information. Were MapQuest to provide an essay on how to get where we’re going, we’d likely get lost and wreck the car on the way as we tried to figure out what to do. Even using complete sentences all the time takes unnecessary space and clutters the page.

Similarly, look at how Wikipedia presents material:

- It uses different fonts, sizing, and color, and puts things in boxes;
- It leads with the conclusion and then provides a written table of contents or a list that does the same;
- It uses links and a bibliography at the end with similar links.

THE ‘E-AGE’

What the designers of Wikipedia understand is that the old hierarchy of writers dictating to readers what they should read, in the order they should read it, has been decimated. For better or worse, one of the key things the “e-age” has done is to give readers the freedom to leave one text to go to another that interests them more. Even legal writers have to play to this impulse, or at least understand its appeal in order to get their material read.

The few principles discussed here are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Lawyers have also been terribly slow to adapt to the notion that an e-mail isn’t a letter sent electronically, but a new form of communication with its own set of rules. Anything longer than, say, 150 words is unlikely to be read. E-mail is also, in essence, a public communication, no matter how many warnings and privilege claims you place at the end (where no one reads them). If you want to ensure privacy and confidentiality in a communication, forget about e-mailing it. Just ask David Petraeus.

CONCLUSION

Over time, the writings of Charles Darwin have been applied to a variety of situations, some inapposite. But he was surely correct when he wrote, “In the struggle for survival, the fittest win out at the expense of their rivals because they succeed in adapting themselves best to their environment.” Adapt to the e-age or die. So far, lawyers aren’t doing nearly enough to adjust.



Maximizing Your Marketing Talent

Strategic Time Management Tips

By Eva Wisnik

Managing your time as a Marketing/BD professional in a law firm is one of the most difficult aspects of the job. I recently presented a Time Management program to coordinators and specialists from a wide variety of law firms, and they confirmed how difficult it is for them to be proactive and to make time to focus on important marketing projects.

The reason that time management is so difficult for law firm marketers is because you are working for multiple bosses in a client-service, reactive work environment. This translates into having little control over what will hit your desk on any given day at any given minute.

How can you, as the Head of Marketing or the Marketing Partner, manage your most valuable resources — your talent — most effectively? Below are six time-management tips for Marketing and Business Development professionals to help your talent be most productive:

1. HELP YOUR TEAM MEMBERS IDENTIFY THEIR ‘HIGH-VALUE PROJECTS’

What work brings the highest value to your firm? For example, the same way a Partner delegates work to the appropriate associate based on his or her level of expertise and billable rate, you want to utilize your team members’ unique talents to execute on the highest level of functions they can deliver.

In order to do this, assess their skills and competencies and have an

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understanding of where each team member adds the greatest value. Your hiring and evaluation process should help you to identify where your team members should focus their time to achieve maximum results for the Firm. Support your team members’ positive contributions and encourage them to focus on these core areas.

2. TELL YOUR TEAM THAT AT LEAST SIX HOURS OF THEIR WORK-DAY WILL BE ‘REACTIVE’

This is the nature of the job and a reality we must accept. If your staff expects to come to work and get six hours of proactive work done from their to-do list, they will be frustrated. Set realistic expectations for your staff and acknowledge that it is “normal” to dedicate six to eight hours of their day to being reactive: responding to lawyers’ requests, putting out “fires” on current projects, phone calls, e-mails, etc.

3. HELP YOUR STAFF STAY FOCUSED

The best way to help your staff to stay focused and capture those momentary opportunities to be proactive is for them to identify the high-value projects that need to be done. Once these are identified, schedule 15-minute to 20-minute chunks of time to work on them throughout the day. Encourage your staff to aim for about two hours of “focused” time a day and know upfront that this will probably occur in six or eight chunks of 15 to 20 minutes, in the midst of six hours of reactive time. The key is to accept that interruptions are part of our unique work environment and to learn how to focus on proactive projects when you have a few minutes.

4. PRIORITIZE REQUESTS

You have many requests coming into your department daily. How do you determine which requests are priorities and which are really only a “time suck” that end up wasting resources? Is your talent dropping important projects to work on these “ideas of the moment,” which are of-

ten discarded the following day or never followed through on?

I had lunch recently with a very talented BD specialist who described a situation in which a Partner had him in his office for two straight days working on research for a new BD initiative — and then never used any of the research that was compiled. If this has ever happened in your department, develop a system to track the results of the projects your department takes on from various Partners.

Chances are the 80/20 rule will apply: where certain Partners are using up about 80% of your department’s resources, but netting only 20% (or less!) of the business development results. By tracking requests for help and the subsequent results of those projects, you will have evidence as to which projects are the best investment of your team’s time and be able to allocate your staff resources more efficiently.

5. ESTABLISH A 3 P.M. ‘CHECK-UP’ RITUAL IN YOUR DEPARTMENT

The goal of this “check-up” is to stop and re-evaluate priorities. Interruptions and unexpected requests often divert what your team members originally had planned for the day. Three p.m. is a good time to take a three-minute time-out and reassess what they should focus on for the next few hours, so they can make the rest of the day as productive as possible. This is also a good time to follow up with Partners whose feedback is needed, or to delegate projects to appropriate resources in order to minimize end of the day crises.

6. TRAIN YOUR STAFF TO STOP INTERRUPTING THEMSELVES

As mentioned, they need to stay focused on important projects. We are all guilty of distracting ourselves by surfing the web, making time for whoever stops by our office, etc. These types of interruptions are ones we can control! Give your team members permission to focus. You might set an example by occasionally closing your door when you have to get something important done

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that requires your full attention. Being responsive and available is very important, but creating time and space to really focus and be 100%

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Then, make the issue multitask for you. Work with the attorney to turn this topic into the focus of a practical client alert on the topic, a by-lined article in a key industry publication, blog and LinkedIn posts, and a firm-hosted seminar.

The key to staying on top of such regulatory changes is timing. Be the

present can be in your “client’s” best interest when critical projects need to be completed.

We have to accept that there are aspects of our work and the legal environment that we do not have control over. However, we do have

first to tell your clients how a critical issue will affect them. Your firm will only benefit by earning a reputation as an authority and go-to resource among its clients.

SPRINGING INTO CHANGE

This spring will surely bring more changes that will affect your law firm and your clients. The key is to simply expect the change, prepare for it and be ready to stay ahead of it. Just think of these changes as a chance

control over integrating effective time-management strategies in place for our talent and helping them feel more in control and productive of their work!



to shake off any doldrums, awaken your mind and enjoy an opportunity to reevaluate, renew, grow and learn. Keep your eyes open this spring — inside and outside of the office — and try to identify more methods to awaken and rejuvenate your law firm marketing best practices.



Voice of the Client

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“perfect pitch”: “I am leaving ABC firm to join XYZ firm. They have a better platform to help me service clients like you with more breadth and depth. XYZ is a law firm leader in your industry. My new firm’s business model will also allow me to do your work personally instead of forcing work down to associates to save you money. My new firm is also very entrepreneurial and allows me to offer you more alternative fee arrangements and more flexible billing.

“That’s an uncomfortable call for several reasons,” notes Weintraub. “First, we know you have promised your new law firm some number or “book” associated with the work you perform for us, the client. It also gives rise to questions about why you have persuaded us to use your

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former firm if they are so poor at servicing our needs.” Instead, Weintraub encourages lawyers to have a frank discussion about your choice to leave your firm.

Don’t assume work follows you. Instead, earn it. Weintraub suggests that you focus your efforts on building client work at your new firm in stages. “Start small and go with a real point of strength at your new firm. From there, build and spread relationships.” He also notes, “There are very few times when all the work will follow the attorney to the new firm so don’t assume the work will always follow.”

Build contingency plans. As we mentioned, Weintraub believes that clients won’t always lift their matters from an existing law firm relationship and place them at the lateral’s new firm “especially if we are in the middle of a time-sensitive matter, or a matter involving a number of specialists who are not moving.” Laterals must build several scenarios and variables into their planning versus relying 100% on existing client portfolios. Weintraub suggests that on matters that may not follow you, offer to stay involved, overseeing the work, and not charging the client.

Be sure to create multiple touch points. According to Weintraub, having a relationship partner is important but having several relationships “to call when I have question that doesn’t rise to the level of my relationship partner is important.” We also know that, generally, the level of client service rises with the increased number of relationships a client has at a law firm.

Vet your new partners for service. Weintraub suggests having open dialog with your new firm’s client team members so that everyone is clear about the client’s expectations regarding responsiveness, accessibility and beyond. “As a client, it’s important that the service level doesn’t dip when a lawyer we work with changes law firms — it may cost you future work” says Weintraub.

HEADS UP FOR LATERALS AND FIRMS

Weintraub also warns both laterals and law firms: “To law firms that have partners and associates leaving their firm to join another firm — get better about communicating to clients when an attorney leaves.”



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