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Strategies for Providing an Outstanding Client Experience

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Attracting new clients is critical to maintaining a successful law firm, but there must also be a coordinated effort to maximize the client service experience once representation begins. Yesterday's level of customer service is no longer enough to meet the expectations of today's legal clients. They expect innovation, convenience, and consistent communication.

With a client-centered strategy, you can work to deliver the level of value and quality that meets client needs. This starts from the initial consultation and continues even after representation ends.

Let's discuss some strategies that law firms can implement to create a client-focused environment where all clients feel valued.

Setting Expectations

As the first substantive communication between firm and client, the intake process is a perfect opportunity to solidify a client-centered approach to legal services. This begins with gaining a clear understanding of the client's needs and expectations, which can be done by asking the following questions:

- What concern led you to seek legal services?
- What criteria did you use when evaluating potential law firms?
- How did you decide to choose this law firm?
- What do you hope to accomplish from your legal representation?

The answers to these questions reveal a lot about a client's journey, while also providing insight into enriching their experience. Once this information is gathered, firms are able to assist clients with managing their expectations.

Intake is the perfect time to establish clear guidelines for client communication, including acceptable methods and what frequency of communications clients should expect. Some law firms choose to provide this information as part of a [welcome packet](#) that includes communication guidelines, firm information, and data specific to their legal matter.

The intake process should also establish the firm's commitment to the truth. Clients need and deserve honest assessments about their legal matters, even if it is not what they want to hear.

Transparency builds trust and strengthens the client relationship, which is essential in a client-

centered practice. By establishing clear and reasonable expectations from the start of representation, law firms lay the foundation for a successful client relationship.

Another strategy for improving the client intake process is to eliminate tedious repetition and inefficiencies. [Legal practice management software](#) helps with streamlining procedures such as client intake and CRM automation. With a faster intake process, casework can start as soon as possible.

Law firms should also insert [calendaring](#) into the intake process by immediately adding all pending court dates or events to the schedule. This prevents missed deadlines or appearances, which is a major impediment to a client-centered approach.

Setting Rates and Fees

Client service should also be evident in a firm's rate and fee setting, which does not necessarily mean offering the lowest prices in the industry.

Yes, being competitive with other law practices is important, but you also need to be careful about undervaluing your services. Potential clients want top-notch skills and expertise when seeking legal counsel, and many are willing to pay more for those services. So, law firms need to set prices that are fair and in line with the level of service that their clients receive.

[Payment options](#) are also an important aspect of pricing. Alternative fee structures, like flat fees and unbundled legal services, have become increasingly popular within the legal industry over the past decade. Clients prefer these options because they allow for a more transparent fee agreement sans unexpected fees and costs.

Firms should also consider the client experience when determining what types of payment methods to accept. Today's clients want the ability to pay their legal fees electronically with credit cards and/or ACH transfers. They appreciate the ease and convenience of these payment options, along with the extra layer of security that they offer.

Managing Communications

Communication is key in a client-centered law practice. The busy nature of a law firm atmosphere can negatively impact client communications when calls and messages go unanswered, so law firms need a system for ensuring timely responses to client inquiries. Even without an immediate solution, a quick response can calm concerns and strengthen the client relationship.

In establishing a communication plan, law firms should consider the following:

- Investing in a [customer relationship management \(CRM\)](#) technology that tracks client contacts and communications
- Implementing a [client portal](#) that allows clients to independently access matter information and communicate with firm personnel
- Practicing active listening that focuses more on understanding than responding. After listening to clients, firm members should repeat what they heard back to the client and request clarification for any uncertainties.
- Scheduling routine check-ins through emails, calls, or the client portal; this helps keep clients up to date on the status of their matters.

Legal matters can be mentally and emotionally draining for clients. By committing to regular communications and outreach, a law firm can provide much-needed support while strengthening the client relationship.

Adequate communication also extends to written communications. To make sure that clients get the most out of all correspondence they receive, law firms should avoid unnecessary legal jargon and use plain, easy-to-understand language instead. You can also improve the readability of their writings by using shorter sentences and avoiding lengthy paragraphs. Consider using techniques such as headings, subheadings, and bulleted lists.

Get Feedback

The client-centered approach does not end after representation. To be truly dedicated to a high-quality experience, law firms need to honestly assess their performance and make improvements where appropriate. Feedback is a great way to accomplish this task, and the following are some ways that you can secure it:

- An exit survey is sent out at the end of the representation to ask clients for honest feedback; when employing this tactic, law firms should use a platform that is easy for recipients to utilize. The simpler the process, the more likely it is that the surveys will be completed.
- A simple question goes a long way. Attorneys and staff members should ask clients about their experiences throughout the representation.
- Social media is another useful tool for securing client feedback. Firms can ask clients to leave reviews on websites like Yelp, Google, or a law firm review site.

Once the feedback is collected, law firms should take steps to act on it. If clients were not happy with some aspect of their representation, firms should implement strategies to address change.

Information gathered from positive responses is useful to reinforce the procedures that make clients feel valued.

Create a Client-Centered Law Firm

Client satisfaction should be an ongoing goal for law firms as they craft a client-centered experience. This starts with asking what clients need and ends with an honest evaluation of whether or not those needs are being met.

By implementing these strategies, law firms add a considerable amount of value to their client service, resulting in happy customers and repeat business. Happy clients also mean potential referral sources for a law firm, helping you grow your business and bring in more revenue.

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