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LEGAL MARKETING

25 Value-Added Services to Offer Your Clients for Free

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Special to the Legal

It's a fun time to be a lawyer right now, isn't it? Your firm is telling you — no, mandating you — to go out and bring in business; clients are scrutinizing your fees and every hour of your time as they never have done before; your colleagues in other firms are losing their jobs and there is less work to go around right now.

Worse, trying to get business is hard and may make you feel uncomfortable.

Well, friends, help is here. I have a game plan for you.

I want you to consider all of the “free” things you can do for current clients, referral sources and potential clients, and if you do the steps I outline below, you will get business, you will get referrals and you will actually come out of this hard time way ahead of your competitors.

First, here is the perspective you need to take: Remember, as kids, we were always told to put ourselves in the other person's shoes before taking a specific action or saying something? Now, more than ever, we have to put ourselves in our clients' (and referral sources') shoes and, in doing this, we will see that these folks:

- Don't want to have any legal fees.
- Want their businesses to grow and succeed.



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- Want to see their families prosper.
- When they have to hire a lawyer to help their business grow or families' prosper, they want someone who is tops in their field, who totally gets their business and how it makes money and is a purveyor of exceptional, responsive service.

So our actions in the coming months have to be geared to showing clients and referral sources that we understand that this is how they feel and what motivates them to have relationships with others.

When they do need legal advice, and they will, my goal is for them to think of you, and they will, if you have proven to them in the past that you really care about them, their company and family.

Here are 25 ways you can do that: I call it providing value-added services. These ideas do not cost your client anything — they are not being billed

for any of it — but they do go a long way toward keeping your name in front of them in a very positive way. The more you do before the end of the year (effectively), the greater the likelihood you will get new work. (All of the following apply to referral sources as well.)

- Visit your clients often and regularly at their place of business. Tell your client the visit is expressly on your nickel. Take a tour of their facility, meet their key people (even secretaries) but go out to their place of business and increase your one-on-one time with them. Ask questions about the business, and listen and learn about your client's challenges and goals. Do not sell.

- Ask clients for feedback on your services. How could you have done better? How could your team have done better? Were you accessible and responsive enough? Again, tell them that the conversation is gratis because they are such valued clients.

- Set up “office hours” visits whereby you get a conference room at the client's office (again, state that your time is on your nickel) and invite various personnel to stop by and ask work-related questions about compliance issues they are dealing with, litigation matters, e-discovery and more for example. Not only will you be seen as helpful — you will likely come back with new matters.

- Use your client's services or buy their product yourself. Let them know you are doing that. Be a vocal and active supporter of their business.

- Send them work, clients or introductions that will help their business. (Ask them what a great customer or client or opportunity looks like, and try to send them some.)

- Look for ways to promote the company or client in your own life. If you are running in a race, by all means, wear the client's logo-emblazoned T-shirt. In fact, ask them for one.

- Nominate your client for an award — like “best company to work for,” “best in-house legal department,” or “best CFO” for example. Many trade and regional publications frequently host such competitions. Nominate your client, and let them know it was your pleasure to do so.

- Support your client's favorite charity. Go to its events, offer to send some of your staff to help and, yes, write a check.

- Conduct free, on-site CLE programs for in-house counsel clients.

- Conduct free, on-site briefings on preventative litigation subjects for clients.

- Do a complimentary preventative audit.

- Make a point to learn the names of a client's significant other and children. Know their ages. If one is college-ready, for example, and possibly applying to a school you went to — offer to meet the child and write a letter of recommendation.

- Specifically tell your client they will not be billed for quick questions or e-mails — ever.

- Interview a client for an article you are writing. Quote them. Spotlight their success in some way.

- Ask the client to be on a panel with you.

- Invite the client to join a group in which you are a member (association, hockey league, charity or even a club). Sponsor them.

- Offer to sit in on their board meetings for free. You may get work from being the “johnny on the spot” in these cases.

- Consider offering to review something of the client's for free — like a manual, policy statement or contract.

- Entertain. Know theirs — and their kids' interests and passions. If their kids love the Phillies, then give them tickets to a game.

Ask clients for feedback on your services. How could you have done better? How could your team have done better?

- Help them solve a non-legal problem — like finding a new space, a new secretary or banker for example.

- Find ways to save them money. Work with them to do this. Have a specific conversation about this subject.

- Ask to go to a trade or industry event with your client to learn more about his or her industry and current challenges. Again, state that this day is on your nickel.

- If your firm is large enough to do so, consider secondment — or

the practice of “lending” one of your associates to a client to be on-site to help them. The right associate will know how to be a star for the client and send you new matters as well.

- Look out for their backs. If you see an article in *The Wall Street Journal* or *The Legal*, for example, that could help their business or those of their clients, send it to them with a short handwritten note. By the way — in my book — handwritten notes trump e-mail notes.

- Befriend your clients. Clients by and large want to have a great relationship with you, and, if you are close with them, it makes it all the more difficult for another law firm to move in on your representation.

So, as I like to say, get up, get out, get going. A prosperous and busy future awaits you! •