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15 Free Things to Do for Clients That Will Make Them Love You More

BY STACY WEST CLARK

Special to the Legal

In a world of rising legal expenses, I want us to consider what we can do for clients that does not cost them anything—and that inures to their personal or professional benefit. In doing these things, I believe you will strengthen ties with clients—who likely are being wooed by your competition. Why would they leave if you are providing them with free value-added services on a regular basis—in addition to terrific legal work and personal, outstanding service.

There is a huge bonus to doing free things for clients at their place of business. Consider this: if you tell the client they are not being charged for any of the activities described below, you can bring as many lawyers from your firm with you as you like. The client won't mind (it's free) and as a result, not only will they get to know (and hopefully like) more members of your firm, but your lawyers will



STACY WEST CLARK

has been helping lawyers and law firms grow their practices and revenues for over 25 years. She is a former attorney with Morgan, Lewis & Bockius and was its first marketing officer. She is president of

Stacy Clark Marketing LLC (www.stacyclark-marketing.com).

get some important and real-time knowledge about the client's business, key personnel and so much more. A true win-win for all.

Here is my top 15 list:

- Hold a regular series of lunch-and-learn programs at the client's place of business. If you can provide CLE or CE credits of any kind—even better. Ask for several topics their management is most interested in hearing about and schedule maybe a lunch once a month or every other. The idea is to be present, appear highly knowledgeable and provide value. The talks should be 30 minutes, include a one-page handout (“what you need to do now”), be free of legalese and leave

them wanting more (as in work you can bill for).

- Hold “office hours” at the client's place of business and invite employees and C-suite professionals to come in and pose questions to you that are within the scope of your representation of the client.

- Ask your client to identify one legal problem they are having, for which you are not their lawyer, and consider writing a client alert or article—outlining ways you would solve it. Provide it as a starting point for dialogue on the matter. You could be able to outshine whatever other lawyer they are using. You will also get bonus points with other clients who get the alert and are grateful for the free advice, too.

- Take note of a client's key business competitor. Provide some thoughts from your vantage point on areas where your client could gain market share and on areas where the competition may be doing things in a better way.

- If you or any lawyer in your firm is going to an important industry

event, ask your key clients if they are going too. If they are not, provide them with a short “highlight sheet” of the “top 5” takeaways from the conference. You just saved your clients a ton of time and money and added value.

- Provide regular updates on proposed legislation or regulations at the local, state or federal level that could affect the client’s business or life. This could be of particular value to small business clients. On a related level, each morning, as you scan ALM and other early a.m. e-blasts, send your clients small snippets of important news/decisions that may matter to them.

- Go on a free site visit and tour of the plant or HQ. See how the widget is made. Ask questions. Learn all you can. Introduce yourself to key managers and C-suite folks. Clients want you to understand their business.

- Consider some kind of free educational talk you, or another lawyer in your firm, could give to all the employees of a client. Popular topics include: powers of attorneys and wills, preventing identify theft and tax-saving ideas. These kind of “employee” benefits make the owners look good to their team and can create a happier workforce.

- Instead of sending gift baskets to clients, kick off fall by gifting key clients hours of on-site training by experts in stress reduction, chair exercise, nutrition, meditation and more that create a better

workplace and enhance your client’s productivity and hopefully bottom line.

- If you come up with a novel way of solving a legal problem for one client, share it with other clients in a way that is generic and does not, in any way shape or form, jeopardize any client confidences. My father-in-law, former chief labor counsel at U.S. Steel, used to tell me how

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much he appreciated when one of his outside counsel sent him portions of briefs they had filed for other clients—which contained arguments possibly of interest to the steel company.

- Attend company board meetings.
- Do a free review of a policy manual or contract.

- Provide a free post-mortem at the conclusion of litigation to advise the client how not to be faced with that same problem again.

- Create an inventory/binder of the client’s intellectual property portfolio.

- Create a list of your firm’s top third-party helpers and provide to your clients. For example, if you have a great moving company, IT support firm, janitorial service, printing service, landscaping, art consultant, shoe repair, travel agent and so much more, package this information and send to your clients to save them the time of starting from scratch to find outside experts.

Note that some of the items on my list, require face-to-face, in-person activity. In terms of strengthening bonds with a key client, I don’t think anything beats a one-to-one interaction.

So, before you leave the office today, pull out your calendar and start scheduling these meetings and programs—and watch your client relationships soar and grow. If you think of others, please let me know. I would love it. As always, I am here to help and I am rooting for you! •