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LEGAL MARKETING

Remote Marketing Strategies: Deliver Value-Added Services Virtually, Part 2

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Special to the Legal

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In my last article in March, I provided 10 suggestions on remote marketing activities you could do that added value to the client relationship.

None of them involved "selling" services to clients as I am very much against and actually uncomfortable with any lawyer doing that until we are really out of the COVID-19 woods. Instead, they were each either free benefits you could deliver to clients (and referral sources) remotely or they were steps you could take right now to increase your position as a thought leader in your particular practice area.

Today, I bring you more such ideas.

• Hold free phone or Zoom office hours with each major client to answer specific questions they have about their situation, including reopening issues, compliance with new state laws and more. Come prepared to discuss the status of their open legal matters and your thoughts on how they should be preparing for reopenings, protecting intellectual property, getting their product out and getting their revenue streams back in order—to the extent you can. It can help make these meetings more productive if you canvass the client on what topics they most wish you to cover before the session.

• Connect your clients with top-level information that is garnered from prominent outside sources. Ohio's Calfee Halter & Griswold law firm has hosted several important programs remotely during the pandemic featuring a roundtable with Mayor Frank G. Jackson of Cleveland, a conversation with Ohio Senate Majority Floor Leader Matt Huffman, a panel discussion with U.S. Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Washington, a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee) and Neil Bradley (executive vice president and chief policy officer of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce), and a talk with Congressman Anthony Gonzalez (R-Ohio, and a member of the House Financial Services Committee) who speaks May 21 at a webinar on the early challenges of the CARES Act, including PPP loan eligibility and forgiveness issues. These talks are a wonderful effort on the part of Calfee's government relations practice to give its clients special access to lawmakers who may have insight into and play prominent roles in their businesses' lives. It also helps solidify the 160-lawyer firm's role, in my mind, as a power player in government circles—a nice association for clients to have.

• Use your newsletter or client alert system to answer specific client questions anonymously. The Chicago-based midsize firm Levenfeld Pearlstein has solicited client questions and answered them on their wonderful "Your Daily Three" e-newsletter. A lawyer is assigned to answer the question (the client name is not revealed) so that the client gets a free answer—which others who get the newsletter can benefit from—and the firm/lawyer is seen as an expert on the topic and a great partner for giving the advice away for free.

According to the firm's chief marketing and engagement officer, Andrea Maciejewski, "The Daily 3" e-newsletter was created to: "First, address the anxiety clients felt during such disrupted, uncertain times. As a result, we built content around daily, actionable 'to-dos' to help them put their business in the best possible position for when the economy reopens and things stabilize and, second, to feed into the real fact that clients wanted to hear how those that were similarly situated were addressing challenges and optimizing opportunities."

Said Maciejewski, "The content has been incredibly engaging and successful by all traditional email marketing metrics (opens, clicks, forwards, new subscribers), anecdotally (the marketing department alone has received over 100 pieces of positive feedback), and has already yielded multiple new legal engagements."

• Hold a webinar and ask clients to submit questions in advance and receive answers for free. My friend, employment lawyer Christina Reger, of The Law Offices of Christina Reger, recently planned an "Ask—HR Office Hours" with hosts, human resources consultants, The O'Connor Group, where she invited clients and friends to submit questions in advance when registering about any employment-related issues including whether they needed to assign someone in the company to be a pandemic safety officer. Nearly 60 people signed up for the free "advice seminar" and asked important employment law and HR compliance questions.

For improving client satisfaction, do a hard check on how easy it is to reach you right now. Check how many rings it takes to get into your voicemail and once in it, how helpful is your message?

Similarly, Levenfeld will be holding a free "Ask a Litigator" session to help clients "mitigate risk and proactively prepare for conflict" in the coming days. During the webinar, anyone can ask questions directly to one of Levenfeld's team of litigators.

(If you are unsure how to do a webinar or need a list of some vendors who could assist with the mechanics, just let me know.)

After holding a webinar, it is a great idea to provide a one-page executive summary to all of your clients. This is another free benefit clients will appreciate.

• Hold roundtables for clients in similar situations. Levenfeld is hosting weekly roundtables of no more than 15 participants to gather and dialogue about the same things the "Daily 3" addresses:

• What can I do now to help my business while things are still volatile?

• What is everyone else doing?

Said Maciejewski, "These are offered around timely topics (reopening), geared toward specific resources (ask a litigator) or meant to gather like-businesses (next weeks is for those that work in private equity.) These roundtables serve the same function as the "Daily 3" but allow their audience to consume information around their preferences and in a way that works best for them."

• Offer more advice for free. One of the area's top family lawyers, Lance Nelson of MacElree Harvey, published a 1,000 word plain-speak piece on his firm's website titled "Do the Right Thing" in which he espoused the virtues of parents involved in family law disputes "doing the right thing"—a piece of guidance that has served him well in advising men and women over the course of a few decades. At the end of his note to clients and friends, he finished with this: "Doing the right thing is not always easy … If you are not sure what the right thing is in your case, call me off the clock, and we can discuss it." In my opinion, this is a great and generous gesture to clients and potential clients from a highly experienced divorce attorney—even if no one takes him up on it.

• For improving client satisfaction, do a hard check on how easy it is to reach you right now. Check how many rings it takes to get into your voicemail and once in it, how helpful is your message? Can a caller get to a live person fast? Do a check on your responsiveness to client inquiries and concerns right now. How fast are you returning calls and emails? How fast are your paralegals or other members of your team responding to client questions and deadlines? Now is the time to make sure your team's personal attention and service is at a heightened level. You should aim for the "experience of being your client" to exceed expectations.

• Reach out to clients you know that have been furloughed or laid off. Be a beacon of kindness with a personal call to see how they are doing and if you can pass their resume along to contacts you have. Try to brainstorm with them on next steps if possible. I promise that if you reach out to people going through a very tough time, they will never forget what you did. This is also a good time to reach out to alumni from your firm who you practiced with and were close to and "check in" with them to see how they are faring.

• Touch clients on LinkedIn and provide thought leadership on areas of your practice. To do this, you should check your LinkedIn account once a week to see all updates from your clients and comment on them. Repost anything they have posted and favorably comment on it. Next, post your own client alerts, podcasts or blog posts to your connections. Then, consider groups on LinkedIn that your clients or targets are members of (you can ascertain this from viewing their profiles) and post items of interest to the group or answer questions being posed by others. Take time now, to check your profile and make sure it is as up-to-date as possible—because once you become even more active on LinkedIn, it will definitely be read.

I eagerly look forward to hearing how you successfully strengthened a client relationship—remotely by doing things that made your client's personal or professional world better. Not only is it a time-tested way to get work, but it feels good too.

In my own consultancy, I have offered clients, in the last two months, actual days of "free guidance and brainstorming." If you would like to avail yourself of time on one of my next "free consulting days," feel free to contact me. •