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LEGAL MARKETING

Best Marketing Tool to Grow Business: Do Special (Free) Things for Clients

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Special to the Legal

It has really hit me—and I am sure you—that during the pandemic personalized acts of service have mattered so much to all of us individually. And not only mattered, but were especially remembered. If you have been touched in such a way by someone—anyone in your life—but in particular a vendor or professional—you’ll keep using them, right? Pretty simple marketing formula.

So, let’s traverse over to you and your practice.

What acts of outstanding, personal service are you doing—that will be remembered by a client or referral source—so much so that coupled with your excellent work product, they will keep using you?

I am happy to share a few vignettes from several great lawyers in the Delaware Valley as tangible examples of what I am talking about. When you read



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them, start thinking: “Can I do that, can I do that?” These are successful business development stories—meant to be emulated and added to by you.

Note—none of them involve any expenditure of your firm’s dollars on beautiful marketing materials, SEO, gorgeous websites, advertisements, directory listings and much more. No, to a letter, they are just a lot of thoughtfulness and personal time—and a true belief that not everything is rooted in the billable hour equation to make your practice successful.

This is what some of your successful colleagues are doing:

• **Harry DiDonato, head of the business practice at Chester County powerhouse MacElree Harvey:**

“During COVID, we were able to help several clients and referral sources ‘off the clock’ obtain PPE loans with lenders and one particular story comes to mind. Last April, with the onset of the PPP loan program, there was a significant amount of confusion with both lenders and borrowers. Many lenders were struggling to get their PPP loan application process open and, if you recall, there were reports at the time that the appropriated money was going fast and that the program was going to run out of money. An existing client that I had helped through the PPP qualification and application process referred a business to me that had a need for funds but their bank had not yet opened their loan portal. They had also called other banks who told them they were not taking on new customers for the PPP loans and were just looking to

service their existing customers. This referral was concerned that the funds may not be available if they waited too long to apply. Upon learning a bit about the business, I realized they would be a coveted customer for a bank in ‘normal’ times. With that information, I called one of my contacts at a bank that I knew was accepting and processing the applications and I connected them with the referral. They were able to obtain their PPP loan in a timely manner. Recently, I heard from the referral that they had a need for some corporate restructuring with a potential for a financing transaction from an investor. They engaged our firm to work with them through the process.”

• **Land use partner Lindsay A. Dunn, MacElree Harvey:**

“I regularly checked in with my clients across various industries in 2020 to see if they needed any assistance navigating how to adapt to regulations when the county within which they operated would change from red to yellow, or yellow to green.”

• **Mark D. Shapiro, partner in South Jersey’s highly respected business boutique, Hyland Levin Shapiro:**

“I represented a successful family business for over 20 years. The mother, sons and others had been active in making the business a success and were always present at important legal meetings.

When I learned that the mother had died, I immediately called the son to offer condolences and talk with him about his mom and reminisced about all the wonderful times she was in the office.”

“Second, a ‘would be’ client hired me for a large deal that went south in the spring due to COVID. No money was made from this representation. Even so, I recently reached out to this would be client just to say hi and hear all about his life and next goals (nothing legal) for 25 minutes on the phone. My potential client really loved the call.”

You will derive tremendous satisfaction from doing something good for someone—that you do not charge for, and for which you will always occupy a very special place in their hearts.

I love this story because guess which lawyer occupies “top-of-mind status” now!

• **Chester County sexual abuse lawyer Dan Monahan:**

“I have cleaned out a blind client’s apartment in Germantown, helped a client move out of her apartment into a new place, paid to put a clergy abuse client up in a hotel when he was alienated

from his parents over Easter, got a clergy abuse client a criminal lawyer who would postpone his fee until our case resolved and have taken numerous clients out for meals (pre-COVID) in cases where there was no fee.”

• **National business immigration lawyer William A. Stock:**

“Just before the holidays, I got connected with a startup fintech firm looking to hire someone whose immigration status was not clear. When the GC was arranging the call, she asked about fees and I said, ‘don’t worry about that for the call, we’ll sort it out if there is something we need to do.’

I got on a call with the GC and the founders and was able to talk through what we knew from the candidate and make sense of his timing to deduce his status. They have now come back to me to retain us as they are hiring other employees who need sponsorship, and the GC said I was the first lawyer she had dealt with who had said, ‘no I won’t send you a bill.’”

• **David Caputo, national whistleblower attorney, founding partner of Youman and Caputo:**

“I had a whistleblower client who was working as a physician’s assistant in a New Jersey hospital overwhelmed by COVID patients in the early stages of the pandemic. My client was going above and beyond to raise money to

purchase PPE for her colleagues at the hospital. I put her in touch with some media contacts, which helped her get some publicity for her cause.”

• **The lawyers of Munley Law, an acclaimed Pennsylvania personal injury law firm:**

“We’ve sent clients to Eagles games, sent flowers after surgeries; we’ve also helped clients find housing when they needed a place to live. Generally, as a family-run law firm, Munley Law brings that approach to all our clients—treating them as we’d treat a member of our family.”

• **Ragi Elias, a registered patent attorney with the IP firm Panitch Schwarze Belisario & Nadel:**

“I’ve been taking the first call with any prospective client during the pandemic ‘pro bono.’ You don’t know what everyone’s situation is during this time, and you don’t want to hinder someone’s ability to potentially better themselves due to initiation costs. So, regardless of the time, 15 minutes or an hour, the prospective client gets the time to have all of their questions answered, irrespective of whether it leads to business.”

• **And a great closing story about the real need to care for your lawyers and staff so they are energized to create those special moments for your clients from Hyland Levin’s Mark Shapiro:**

“Without the full support of your team, your clients will not receive the high level of service they deserve. Finding ways to replace in-person contact is challenging. Showing how much you care is much more difficult virtually than in person. One of the more impactful exercises we did as a firm was discuss an article titled: ‘The Great Refresh: Values Reset in the Age of COVID-19, Over Zoom.’ The uncertainty of the impact of the virus caused great anxiety. We discussed strategies to deal with these feelings and new ideas on things like in-home entertainment, remote learning for our children, use of technology, consumption of news, exercise ideas and otherwise taking care of ourselves physically and mentally. Nurturing your team, in ways other than delving into substantive legal issues, also needs to be a high priority for excellent client service.”

MORAL OF THESE VIGNETTES

Pay extra special attention now to your clients, referral sources and members of your firm. Act. It can be so easy to develop more work from your clients—Be a good friend or a colleague and do something special for them individually that actually means something to them. Know their stories. Treat them as “VIPs” in your life. You will derive

tremendous satisfaction from doing something good for someone—that you do not charge for, and for which you will always occupy a very special place in their hearts.

It sounds like a Hallmark moment—but in reality—it is a hard-core principle of successful business development.

I would love to hear about what you have done along these lines. Email me at stacy@stacyclark-marketing.com and maybe I can tell your story next time. •