

## Grow Your Practice Series:

October 2007

### 101 Ways to Effectively Market Your Law Firm

#### No. 55: Use the Intelligence You Glean from Your Client Surveys to Make Your Law Firm More Client-Friendly

This is the fourth and final installment of a series on collecting and using feedback from former clients. We initially covered the many benefits of surveying your former clients, then addressed what types of questions to ask as well as what to specifically ask about, and how to optimize survey responses. We even included a sample survey. In this final installment of the series, we address what to do with the responses you receive from your former clients.



**Prototype Client Satisfaction Survey:** If you missed it or want to refer back to it, the June **Attorney@law** included a sample client satisfaction survey. We will be referencing possible answers to the questions in this survey, so you may want to take a look at it.

**Clients Who Do NOT Respond:** If a client does not respond to your survey mailer, it's not a bad idea to send out a second survey two or three weeks later. We've all received something in the mail, meant to respond to it, put it our To-Do stack, and never got to it. A second survey mailer is not too pushy and not too expensive, but if a client does not respond to two surveys, he or she is not going to respond to a third one.

**Clients Who DO Respond:** Clients who take the time to complete and return the survey should receive a thank-you letter. Look at this three ways.

- ◆ **Client Thinks You Are Just Great:** A thank-you letter will confirm that belief and generate word-of-mouth referrals for you.
- ◆ **Client Is Not Totally—or Is Just Partially—Satisfied:** Thanking the client for responding to your survey can only improve his or her impression of your law practice.
- ◆ **Client Is Totally Dissatisfied!** What do you have to lose at that point?

**Analyzing the Results:** The key here is to look for trends. If you have just one client who responds negatively to the first question, and that client ended up with a very small settlement, but all the other clients who responded—even those whose cases did not generate large settlements—responded positively to the first question, you have to consider that one negative response to be an anomaly. Here are some trends to look out for.



- ◆ **What Did Those Who Received NO Settlement Have to Say?** It is understandable for a client for whom you were unable to receive a settlement to answer the fourth question that he or she was totally unsatisfied. That's understandable. If, however, they still ranked your staff as courteous and professional, your law firm is really doing the best it can under bad circumstances.
- ◆ **How Did Those Who Received Large Settlements Respond?** If a client who received a substantial settlement did not rate your firm high in all categories, from meeting the client's expectations to the professionalism of your staff and attorneys, then you really have a problem!

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- ◆ **Those Who Received Moderate Settlements Really Tell the Tale!** The client who received a moderate settlement—not what the client was really hoping for or what you and the client believed he or she really deserved—but the client did walk away with a cash settlement, is the client whose response is the most valid. Those clients are not over-enthusiastic about your firm because you hit a home run for them, and neither are they angry at you. Their responses are clearly the most valid in terms of a clear evaluation of your firm's client services' capabilities.
- ◆ **Look for a Recurring Trend:** If, for example, several clients rate your firm as "met my expectations," rated your staff as "very helpful and professional," but rated his or her attorney as "not totally satisfied," it is clear that you have a staff that relates well to clients, but attorneys who do not! Such results indicate a need for client services training for your attorneys. Of course, the opposite could occur, and it could be your staff that is not connecting with your clients while your attorneys are.

**How To Respond to the Client:** As we pointed out earlier, every client who completes a client survey deserves a response that should fall into one of four categories.

- ◆ **The Totally Satisfied Client:** This client is sent a letter thanking him or her for responding to the survey and stating that the firm is pleased that you were able to provide a high level of service. And put that client on your Christmas/Holiday Card or Calendar list.
- ◆ **The Marginally Satisfied Client with a Complaint Similar to Others:** Also thank this client for responding to the survey, point out that the client satisfaction survey revealed areas where your firm clearly needs to make improvements, and steps are being taking to provide a higher level of service to clients in the future. Put that client on your mailing list.
- ◆ **The Unsatisfied Client with Inconsistent Complaints:** Thank this client for responding and add that the areas in which the client was not satisfied will be looked at. This client is not likely to refer business to you, so save your postage.
- ◆ **The Totally Unsatisfied Client:** Also thank this client, and write that you are sorry that you were not able to meet their expectations.



**Hard Choices:** Finally, take the results of the survey as the constructive criticism they are meant to be, and keep in mind that perception is reality. The survey does not reveal any great truths. It reveals the impressions your clients have about your law firm, you staff, your attorneys and your capabilities. They will share those impressions with their friends, relatives, neighbors and co-workers, and future clients will continue to receive the same impressions about your firm.

## Managing Your Practice: You Cannot Effectively Do Any Marketing without a Marketing Plan

We believe it was Yogi Berra (and if it was not, it should have been) who said "If you do not know where you are going, it doesn't make any difference when you get there." The problem that many professional service providers such as law firms have is that their marketing is not part of a comprehensive plan. It is very often an on-again, off-again series of starts and stops that occur with no consistency and no overall theme, vision, goals or objectives.

**Think in One-Year Increments:** While every enterprise needs long-term goals and objectives, a Marketing Plan should cover a one-year cycle. It can be a calendar year or your fiscal year or any other 12-month cycle you chose. We are running this article in the October issue of **Attorney@law** because for the law firm that does its Marketing Plan on a calendar-year basis, this is the time to get started on the 2008 Marketing Plan.

**Key Elements in the Plan:** While each law practice is unique, there should be common elements in their marketing plans.



- ◆ **What Is the Message?** Are you specialists in personal injury, or are you a full-service, cradle-to-grave type of law firm? What makes your practice better, different or unique?
- ◆ **New Clients:** How many new clients do you expect your marketing to generate? This should be expressed in a range in which the lower number is 75% to 80% of the larger number. For example, 100 to 200 is too wide a range, while 75 to 100 or 250 to 300 is a more reasonable range.
- ◆ **Specific Marketing Initiatives:** Will you use classified ads, the Yellow Pages, television, radio, billboards or something else to make your services known to prospective clients?



- ◆ **Marketing Budget:** How much will you spend on each marketing channel, and what is the total budget for marketing including support items such as your firm's website, prospectus and indirect costs such as postage?
- ◆ **Average Cost per Inquiry:** Divide the number of projected inquiries (an inquiry is anyone who contacts you about representing them, whether or not they become a new client) by the total cost to get a cost-per-inquiry.
- ◆ **Average Cost per New Client:** Then divide the number of new clients you expect to generate by the cost the total marketing budget to compute cost-per-new-client.

**First, Second or Third Plan:** Understand going into this exercise, if this is the first year you have worked from a written Marketing Plan, that your numbers at the end of the year may be way off. The first Marketing Plan is clearly a learning experience.

◆ **First-Time Programs:** If you will be running radio for the first time, it will be especially hard to predict how many calls you will receive and how many of those will convert to new clients. If your ad agency or the local station has run radio ads for other attorneys, they may have some numbers to share with you. If not, still make the agency and station give you a projection. After all, that is their business, so put them on the hook for at least a projection.

◆ **Second and Third-Time Programs:** If, however, you've run radio in the past, you will have a much better estimate of the type of response you will get.

**And Finally:** A Marketing Plan is something you live by, not something you die by. If just three months into the plan you are not getting the response you had hoped for from radio (to stay with that example), but you are getting a good response to billboards, switch your money from radio to billboards.

**Next Month:** How to make your Marketing Plan a living, breathing, interactive management tool.



## Legal Finance: LawMax Now Funds Workers' Comp!

Thousands of Workers' Compensation cases are filed each year, and until now, LawMax has not been able to fund them. Many law firms have approached us over the years requesting advances for clients with Workers' Comp claims, so we carefully reviewed the Workers' Comp system in each state and the District of Columbia and, effective immediately, LawMax will consider funding Workers' Comp cases in 28 states.

**The Challenge with Workers' Comp:** We have not traditionally funded workers' compensation claims because the proceeds of the claim are paid directly to the injured worker, making it difficult to get the advance re-paid, while some states prohibit the assignment of workers' comp proceeds.

**What We Will Consider Funding:** There are, however, several states in which workers' comp claims are handled similar to how personal injury claims are—the attorney works on a contingency basis and the proceeds of the settlement are paid to the attorney. In states where these conditions exist, **LawMax** will consider making advances to plaintiffs in workers' compensation cases. And the process for getting a Workers' Comp client funded is essentially the same as if he or she were filing a personal injury lawsuit.

**In Which States Will We Fund Cases?** To make it easy, here are two lists, those states in which we can, and those states in which we cannot, fund Workers' Compensation claims.

### CAN Fund Worker's Comp Cases

Alabama  
Arizona  
Connecticut  
Delaware  
Florida  
Georgia  
Idaho  
Iowa

Louisiana  
Maine  
Mississippi  
Missouri  
Montana  
Nebraska  
Nevada  
New Hampshire

New Mexico  
North Dakota  
Rhode Island  
South Carolina  
South Dakota  
Tennessee  
Vermont  
West Virginia  
Wyoming



**CANNOT Fund Worker's Comp Cases**

Alaska	Kentucky	Oklahoma
Arkansas	Maryland	Oregon
California	Massachusetts	Pennsylvania
Colorado	Michigan	Texas
DC	Minnesota	Utah
Hawaii	New Jersey	Virginia
Illinois	New York	Washington
Indiana	North Carolina	Wisconsin
Kansas	Ohio	

**Disclaimer: The Marketing Advice We Offer May NOT Be Applicable in Your State!**

We try to provide practical marketing advice as part of this e-letter, but please be aware that everything we recommend may not be permissible in every state. Each state Bar Association has slightly different guidelines as to what is and is not ethical for an attorney to do in terms of advertising and promotion, and each state has different laws covering exactly how attorneys can promote their practices. We recommend that you make sure what we promote in **Attorney@law** is both ethical and legal in the jurisdictions in which you practice.