The three tools law firms need to survive and thrive

For small firms, staying on top of cases, growing the business, and getting paid can become overwhelming. Many small firms want to ensure they are setup for success. Here are three of the most important tools you need to run an efficient law practice, and continue to grow in a competitive market throughout the year.

Automated marketing

When casework piles up, marketing your business is probably one of the last things you think about. Without consistent marketing though, it is next to impossible to continue to grow your business.

Every person you meet, greet, or correspond with should be in your email list. If you are not collecting email addresses or phone numbers, you are throwing your hard earned money away. The time when law firms could rely on repeat or referral business is over. Now you have to earn it, with your reputation and savvy marketing.

Sending a once per month email newsletter, blog digest, or frequently asked question can be the difference between the client choosing you… or the law firm across the street. Want to go the extra mile? Creating informative free guides, eBooks, motivational messages, or answers to frequently asked questions are the most common topics found in attorney email marketing.

Sharing your opinion, focusing on the value of working with an experienced attorney keeps the conversation going about your services, and why you are the right person to deliver them. When a legal need arises, creative communication and timing work in your favor. Be the attorney that people remember; recommend, and refer…instead of forget.

Credit card and ACH payment processing

When is the last time you saw someone pull out their checkbook at the grocery store? If it was recently, you should have also noticed the entire line cringe and sigh as it happened. The fact of the matter is, we’ve been trained to click, swipe, or tap to pay. The thought of paper payment is intimidating, frightening, and seems like a bother. When a client retains you, what is the expected process for payments? Do you have one? You should.

As a business owner, the smartest thing you can do is remove every obstacle to paying you for your services. If you haven’t investigated digital online payments, credit card processing, or electronic check/ACH payments, you need to – like yesterday.

Document automation tools

Time is money. The more of it you spend on the tasks that technology can manage for you, the less that ends up in your bank account. Many small law firms feel pressured to match or beat the fees of their competitors. Clients are self-educating on Google, or comparing the costs of legal kits on sites like Rocket Lawyer or Legal Zoom. So how do you compete, without losing money?

Become more efficient. Period.

With an already competitive market, you can’t raise your fees, so where does that leave you? You have to find ways to eliminate errors, reduce preparation time, and ensure that your staff is following the same procedure for each task or document type. Most law firms use the same documents, or template starting points, for a majority of their transactional work.

Instead of using ‘search & replace’ as your pseudo-paralegal, invest in a document automation solution that can execute the first bit of work for you. Trim hours out of your day by turning your most commonly used documents, agreements, letters, work product, and emails into templates. Then auto-fill them with every detail of client information you possibly can.

Whether you adopt one or more of the solutions listed above, please keep this in mind – the longer you wait, the more firms move ahead around you. Implementing a solution today means better returns and security. So no matter what you do, just start. Even if it’s one small step at a time.

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