

How to make calling your firm a positive experience for clients

By Christopher F. Earley



I believe the telephone and the way it is handled is one of the most important aspects of running a successful law office. Here are some easy and free ways to

improve the experience for all callers to your firm:

The greeting. The telephone greeting is really, really important. Instead of the cold and off-putting "Law office," try: "Good afternoon, welcome to Smith Law. This is Henry. How may I best help you?" This is low-hanging fruit that, when implemented into every call greeting, radically and swiftly tells the caller they have not called an average law firm. Instead, they have called a law firm that sounds warm and inviting. That can be really disarming to people who may feel nervous and uneasy about calling a lawyer. If your telephone greeting is not right, change it immediately.

Empathy. People call lawyers because they have a problem that needs to be solved. That is why demonstrating empathy on the phone with potential and existing clients is so very important. Empathy creates a connection and tells the caller they are being heard. I always teach my team members to speak with clients and potential clients the same way they would speak with their grandmother.

Hold times. Many times we unknowingly keep people on hold for much too long. Placing someone on hold for just two minutes feels like four minutes to the person holding. Also, make sure that all callers, before being placed on

hold, are asked for permission to be put on hold.

Forwarding the caller. If a caller is going to be forwarded to someone else, the caller should first be asked for permission to be forwarded, and should be told the name and title of the person they are being transferred to. These are minor telephone details that really stand out to callers to your firm.

Scripts. The more you can script the call experience for people who call your firm, the better. Scripts can help guide team members to provide all callers with a truly memorable experience. Of

course, we don't want team members to sound like robots. But the better the phone process can be scripted, the better the telephone process will be handled.

Afterhours calls from potential clients. When new clients call afterhours and on weekends, are they reaching a human being or voicemail? Imagine your toilet is overflowing and you need a plumber immediately. Are you going

Properly handling all phone calls at your firm is a small hinge that opens big doors.

to call a few plumbers and leave voice-mails and hope to get a call back? Probably not. You are going to keep calling plumbers until you reach a live person who can offer immediate assistance. Potential clients calling your practice are no different. Ignore the need to have someone answer your phones afterhours for potential clients at your own peril.

Properly handling all phone calls at your firm is a small hinge that opens big doors. Always seek to identify ways the phones can be improved at your firm, and you will reap the rewards. **MLW**

EARLEY ON
practice management

Christopher F. Earley is a Boston attorney and author who concentrates his practice on the representation of the seriously injured and their families.