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Rethinking the Way It's Always Been Done

By Christopher Earley

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"If you are always trying to be normal, you will never know how amazing you can be."—Maya Angelou

They say if you are doing what everyone else is doing, then you are by definition average. Lawyers and law firms often market themselves and operate their practices very conventionally because that is the way it has always been done in our profession. But who says it has to be done that way? Personally, I strive to have my firm stand out in what is a very crowded profession. Here are some easy and completely free ways that you can show up differently and stand out:

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Marketing Differently

Are you doing what all other lawyers do when it comes to marketing, or are you being different? Do you have a standard lawyer website featuring the scales of justice with lawyers looking stern and with their arms crossed? Do you boast about how much experience you have or all the education you have? Prospective clients don't care about you or where you went to school. They know you are smart. But what they care about is how you are going to solve problem. And how are you going to do it better than all the other lawyers they have to

choose from? Make all your marketing not about you but about the potential client. Educate potential clients rather than sell to them. By marketing this way, you will stand out from other law firms, and you will get more—and better—cases than your competitors.

Treating Staff Like Gold

I make it a priority to go above and beyond for my team members. All too often, I see fellow lawyers not give their staff the love they deserve. For example, on Fridays I buy lunch for the team, which I know they appreciate. If someone is doing a great job, I make sure to give him or her a shout-out. I have been told by staff that they truly enjoy working for me. To me, there is no greater compliment than hearing from team members that they truly love their job. The way you treat staff is the way they will treat your clients. Treat staff like gold, and you will stand out from other employers, and this will help you to attract and retain top talent.

Treating Clients Exceptionally

You will definitely stand out from other firms in your area if you truly prioritize treating clients the way they deserve to be treated. Many lawyers take clients for granted. Do this at your own peril. Today's consumer wants to feel valued and appreciated, and they expect you to provide that. If you don't show them that, they will likely not refer their family and friends to you. They may even leave you a negative review online. I always tell my team, "Show the clients the love." By treating clients really well, you will stand out in your market because your competitors are probably not doing this. It is all about providing a five-star experience that makes clients *feel* really good. Always focus on improving the client experience. I believe this should start first with the phones and the way they are handled. I consistently emphasize to my team to talk with clients the same way you would talk with your grandmother. After all, clients came to you with a problem. Show them empathy, compassion, and top-notch service. Do that, and they will love you—and refer to you.

Treating Referring Lawyers Exceptionally

Treating referring attorneys the right way is just as important as treating clients the right way, but this, too, is frequently neglected. I know that when I refer a case to another lawyer, it is /s nice to receive at least a thank-you. Unfortunately, this does not happen nearly enough

in our profession. If you make a big deal out of receiving a referral from another lawyer (even if you ultimately reject the case), you will stand out from the pack, and that lawyer will likely send you more work. Whenever I receive a referral, I send a handwritten thank-you card and sometimes a box of chocolates, as well as mentioning the lawyer's name in my monthly newsletter. Show referring lawyers true appreciation for their referrals, and you will be sure to stand out among other lawyers. Be careful, however, to follow all ethical rules in your jurisdiction, especially when a referral fee is to be paid to another attorney. It's important to show thanks and appreciation, but don't cross the line.

Be sure to update referring lawyers regularly on the status of their referred cases. The more you focus on deepening the relationship with your referring attorneys, the more referrals you will receive. This is an easy thing to do but is sadly neglected in our profession.

All the above tips are free, low-hanging fruit and are easy to implement immediately. If you want to create a special law firm that grows, be different and stand out.

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