The Email Blast Client Alert is Dead!

By Cordell Parvin on March 12th, 2013

Yesterday I posted: Do you have any NEW cheap moves and promised to share with you additional moves the Spencer Fane Britt & Browne LLP Labor and Employment Law Group are making to better serve the firm's clients and attract new clients.

If you are a regular reader you know that I believe blast email alerts are not an effective way to keep clients informed. On the other hand, I believe when a lawyer sends a personal email with the alert, that can be effective. When I met with him last week, I asked David Kight to share with you what his labor and employment law group is doing instead of blast alerts.

Guest blogger David Kight

Like most law firms, we sent out client alerts from time to time. The Labor and Employment Group at Spencer Fane was no different. If there was a major legal decision in our area of law, you can bet that we sent a client alert. However, we found that our clients were getting several different client alerts on the same case or development. We found that unless we were first to market on the alert, our alert could (and we suspect did) get lost in the shuffle. In talking to our clients, we also learned that the alerts may have been interesting to lawyers in our area, they were not practical. In short, our clients weren't particularly engaged with our client alerts.

So, we went back to the drawing board. Instead of evaluating whether a development was "client-alert-worthy", we decided that there were multiple avenues of communicating with our clients. We began this process as we were cleaning up a mish-mash of blogs that we were bringing to a new platform along with a roll out of a new website. We dropped the three topic specific blogs for a unified blog. We then developed several different items:

- We chose to move to a twice-monthly e-mail to clients we call "Top Tips." Top Tips are designed to be read on a computer screen – ½ page of text or less. These Top Tips are sent twice per month on varying topics, including how to review non-compete agreements, how to prepare for litigation, and tips on avoiding retaliation claims.

- We also chose to take a disciplined approach to our blog. Rather than have one to two lawyers blogging, we felt that having as many lawyers as possible was better. First, it reduces the workload for everyone by spreading the tasks. Second, by involving more contributors we get better and more diverse topics. It also shows group depth. Ultimately we thought we would have a better product. We developed a blog production schedule for 2 – 3 blogs per month in addition to our Top Tips.

- Finally, we chose to provide a single e-mail to clients each month, called Month in Review. This single e-mail was populated with three different items: a) our twice-monthly Top Tips; b) all blog entries that month; and c) any upcoming events or presentations by our group members. We've had better response to these e-mails than we did with our client alerts. They are, without question, the most popular communication we send to our clients. It is sent the same time each month and has all our content in clickable snippets. Thus, even if our clients don't see a blog entry on our blog, they will see it by the end of the month.

We took a critical review of what we did, how it was received and how we could improve on a client alert. We went a different way and we are getting great responses. So, with only a few exceptions, the client alert is dead at our firm. Our clients will not miss it.

Your clients will not miss receiving blast email alerts. Which of Dave's ideas could you implement?

Cordell M. Parvin built a national construction practice during his 35 years practicing law. At Jenkens & Gilchrist, Mr. Parvin was the Construction Law Practice Group Leader and was also responsible for the firm's attorney development practice. While there he taught client development and created a coaching program for junior partners. In 2005, Mr. Parvin left the firm and started Cordell Parvin LLC. He now works with lawyers and law firms on career development and planning and client development. He is the co-author of ***Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout*** and other books for lawyers. To learn more visit his Web site, www.cordellparvin.com or contact him at cparvin@cordellparvin.com.