

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO TRUST

March 19, 2008 by Nancy Myrland, Myrland Marketing, Inc.

Thursday was another great day at the LMA Conference in Los Angeles. Even though I was 3 hours off on my internal clock, and it is the middle of the night, I have a few thoughts to share with you that I think you and your firm might find useful. They have to do with your clients and what they want from your firms and your attorneys.

One of the most powerful presentations of the day was facilitated by veteran marketer and Zeughouser Group consultant, Mozghan Mizban. Panelists included Zeughouser colleague, Melissa Hoff, Client Development Manager from Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, David Wolber, and last, but definitely not least, Steven Rodgers, Director of Litigation for Intel.

Steve's comments were worth the price of admission as he is in the position of evaluating, working with, and maximizing Intel's use of dozens of law firms, soon to be only 6 after next week.

The discussion centered around client teams and client service interviews. A few thoughts Steve shared when asked about the law firm/client relationship from his vantage point at Intel are to be noted and shared with your attorneys, along with your suggestions and/or a plan for what your firms and attorneys can do to become what Steve, and others like him, need:

Steve:

"It all comes down to trust. There are probably hundreds of firms that could handle specific issues for us without any difference in the outcome."

Bottom line: Steve just gave what amounts to a free pass to those firms that get how to become trustworthy to him on an ongoing basis. I suggest you work to figure out how to do that.

When asked what is important for law firms (to know and do for Intel), Steve wants the following:

- "I want a firm that cares about understanding what I want and what I need."
- "I want firms who truly seek to understand me....who know me so well they could almost do my job."

- “I want firms who come to me and say ‘Here’s what we perceive to be your situation and here’s what we think you should do.’ “

What does this mean? Spend some time learning how to that which Steve described above. It’s not rocket science. It just takes deliberate, authentic, ongoing effort.

Another question asked of Steve was how firms get to know him:

- “They ask.”
- “Only 2 Managing Partners have called me in the past several years.”

His point: He isn’t hard to get to know if you just spend time asking him what makes him tick, what 3 things are bothering him, or are important to him, and checking in with him on a regular, unbilled basis to make sure you understand him. Only then can you truly perform intelligent legal work truly based on his needs.

When asked what he thinks of the client satisfaction interview process, and who should conduct these interviews:

“There are things I am just not going to say to somebody’s face, so having an intermediary is key.”

Regarding how many of the firms Intel uses have client teams devoted to Intel:

“I’d be willing to bet I can identify which of my firms have client teams and communicate regularly.”

His point here was that it becomes completely transparent when firms form client teams around his work and Intel, meaning they communicate strategically, methodically and with purpose about how best to take care of Steve and Intel. It takes time and thought, but it can and should be done.

Someone asked Steve what was important for the relationship manager to know:

- Put my needs ahead of the firm’s
- Be powerful enough in the firm to advocate for what I want and need.
- Sometimes it’s hard to tell who they work for....Intel or the firm
- They tend to think of things before I do.

Steve’s comments are not to be taken lightly. I would advise all firms with clients to sit down and think how to deliberately create the situation Steve

has outlined. Do it now before you find yourself in the position dozens of firms will be in next week when he narrows his choice of firms down to six.

Don't give all the Steve Rodgers of this world the opportunity to even think about being frustrated, or to find a need to whittle their numbers of firms down. Sit down and think hard about how to make individual clients happy, then set about doing it—tomorrow—or go ahead and start today if you have time!

Here's to another valuable day of information for law firm attorneys and marketers from the LMA Conference! Good job conference organizers and all those involved.

Nancy

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