

Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

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Five Hot Tips for Client and Business Development

During our recent 2011 Asia Pacific Regional Meeting in Hanoi, I gave a presentation on five hot tips for client and business development.

These are all things that are familiar to the lawyers in our group, and probably all of you as well, but because they're important, I felt they bear repeating.

Five Hot Tips

1. **Treat Your Clients as King:** Your clients deserve to be treated like royalty. *Deliver WOW* to your clients by meeting their needs, not yours. Clients want to know what you can do for them, and the steps they need to follow to take action. Give them these things in a clear, easily understandable way, and you will undoubtedly find "favor with the king."
2. **Spread Ideas and Move People...Through Social Media:** It can sound like a lot of what is out there is just noise. But you can be out there, sharing your message. Think like your clients and provide them with the message that is most useful to them. You're not using social media to talk at people - you're there to talk with them.

When using social media, listen first and never stop listening. Be authentic and vulnerable, share stories with your audience, ask questions, provide value for free (yes, for free!), and engage with them.

1. **Have a Plan:** Unfortunately, you need more than one plan. Among others, you need a client development plan, a crisis communication plan, and a social media plan. This may seem like overkill, but when you take the time to plan, the efforts that you expend executing these plans will be MUCH more efficient and targeted.



Client Development Plan: This should be a written one, with written goals. For more information, see the [re-cap of Cordell Parvin's webinar on Client Development 101](#).

Crisis Communications Plan: This can be for a physical crisis, like Hurricane Katrina, or for a communications crisis such as the Kenneth Cole comments about Egypt. For more information on crisis planning, see [my comments from crisis communications' expert Harry Rhulen](#).

Social Media Plan: The reason that this is beneficial is that social media CAN be a time suck. If you have a plan, your social media efforts are targeted to the places your clients are, and their more efficient and effective.

2. **Practice Marketing, Not Decoration:** You may be wondering what I mean by "decoration" - things can look pretty and sound good, but are they just window dressing? Whenever you're marketing your firm, make sure you know the one thing that sets you apart, differentiates you. Don't be distracted by what looks pretty.

Understand your audience, constantly communicate your benefits and keep the focus on the service you're offering, and be memorable. These lessons were illustrated by this year's American Superbowl commercials - [the good, the bad and the ugly](#).

You may wonder what the products showcased during the Superbowl have to do with law firms, but we can learn a lot from what other industries are doing well, and what they're not doing well. Advertising is also just an extension of larger marketing efforts, so you don't have to be advertising your firm to learn these lessons.

3. **Cultivate Healthy Relationships:** The members of the ILN already know this tip well from working on their relationships at our conferences and industry events, which leads to business. But the one thing I've been hearing over and over again in 2011 from the legal industry is that clients hire lawyers...not law firms. So with that being the case, it's essential to develop relationships with your clients and potential clients, not just do good work for them (that's expected). There are a lot of ways you can do this, so figure out what works best for you, and your clients.

Why bother with any of these tips? Why not just keep doing things the way you're used to? The answer is simple - because everyone else does it that way too. You need to stand apart and be different.

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