

# Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

## LMA2012 - Finding our Inspiration, Part II

Posted on March 29, 2012 by Lindsay Griffiths

Yesterday, we talked about [the first half of Jim Kane's keynote presentation](#) at the 2012 Legal Marketing Association's Annual Conference. Now, let's jump into the second part!

### The Stages of Love

After discussing the various levels of relationships, Jim moved on to talk about the stages of love – the first stage is attraction, which is contextual and about recognizing something familiar in the other person. We desire what is familiar and what we aspire to. In the legal industry, this is known as “marketing.” Our job as marketers is to understand what attraction is for our various audiences – in particular, to understand that one size doesn’t fit all.



The second stage of love is passion – every new relationship needs something different than the existing relationships – they need to feel passion. Though Jim cautioned “Don’t bring technology into a relationship too soon – it makes you appear creepy.”

Once we get past these two stages, we’re into “pair-bonding.” This is a critical piece. Pair-bonding is what loyalty is really about – why do you stay in a relationship after the attraction and passion is gone? Jim says that people typically stay for two reasons – 1) “You make my life easier” or 2) “You make my life better.”

This becomes more difficult with the paradox of choices – the more choices we have, the harder it is to make a choice. So you end up grabbing the same thing you’ve always grabbed, until the price changes, or something else changes. Then you second guess your choice.

Clients are doing the same thing – why would they choose you as a lawyer, when they have so many options? If people have an abundance of choices, you may not be the one on the first page. To emphasized this, Jim said that he had googled “law firms.” 135 million results came up, so he challenges our attorneys to figure out how they stand out in a sea of lawyers.

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Jim said that people don't really want a lot of choices, they actually want control. They want good things, but the control to choose them. For loyalty to develop, there needs to be trust, belonging and purpose – if you can satisfy these things, you can develop a loyal relationship.

## **Trust**

We went into more depth about these three things – trust, belonging and purpose – beginning with trust. Trust is an expectation, so you get zero credit for being trustworthy. It's the same with quality – Jim used the example of an advertisement from Ford, which said "Quality is Job #1" He joked "Was that an option?" It's the same with law firms – there is an expectation of quality. So you're not going to get credit for doing things that are a basic expectation.

He added that it doesn't matter what you think of yourself; it only matters what someone else's expectations of your competency are.

With the advent of the internet, we're now even more connected to a world outside of our community. As the world becomes more global, we work to become better global citizens, and law firms often make charitable donations. Jim suggested that we not take the credit when making a donation, because clients made that possible by paying their bills. Instead, help your clients feel that THEY made a difference because of you, not that YOU made a difference.

## **Belonging**

Belonging requires a sense of recognition – do you really know the person, or do you just know their bio? He went back to his airline example, saying that despite being a member of their loyalty program and regularly flying this one airline, they never seem to learn anything about him. However, when he flew Singapore Air one time, he asked for a certain kind of water. They didn't have any, but the next time he flew with them, they had some for him. How can you recreate that type of experience for your clients?

How can you learn more about someone? Jim suggested that social media is invaluable for learning who someone is. He also asked how prepared the firm's receptionists are when a client comes to the firm. Building relationships isn't limited to the attorneys – you have to make sure that your entire organization is dedicated to building relationships using these principles. If the firm doesn't know who someone is, that reduces them to a simple transaction.

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Being insightful and looking behind the obvious is also a critical skill to have. You need to figure out what your clients really NEED. For example, send them things that really matter, not promotional pieces. Be proactive; “solve someone’s problem BEFORE” they ask you to. If they ask and then you do it, you’re just being courteous.

Jim also emphasized the importance of including clients in the process, even if you steer them in the direction that you want to go.

Clients also need a sense of identity – do they see something in you that they recognize in themselves? The way to foster this is by sharing yourself. For example, at the Westin Hotels, they put something that their employees are passionate about on their nametag. Paint a picture for someone that lets them buy into that story, and you’ll get better buy-in from them.

As time was running short, Jim didn’t delve into the topic of purpose, but in his loyalty workbook, he says:

“A company’s purpose is the set of reasons for conducting business that resonates with people’s ideas about what is right or worthwhile. But they are also typically rooted in one or more traditions articulated throughout human history by moral philosophers. These traditions draw on common experience and world views and have played a major role in shaping modern culture. Hence individuals from widely different backgrounds can often share the same purpose.”

He goes on to ask:

“Do your relationships believe you stand for something bigger than both of you? Do they believe you have a shared view of the future and see the importance in a greater cause?” and “Do your relationships see your involvement in social causes as community-building, or is it all about you?” Then, “Do your relationships believe you are deeply committed to the causes and values you claim to support?”

Jim really took us out with a bang, saying “Your relationships WANT to be loyal,” and that they’ll be watching us. To drive this home, he played a series of slides, set to The Police’s “I’ll be Watching You,” which had facts about some of those in the audience. Jim had googled members of the audience, and found facts about them that he shared with us through the slides. It especially connected him to those participants, and by extension, to those who know those people. Another great illustration of his words!

## **What lessons can we take from this?**

- How are we fostering loyal relationships? Are we building trust, fostering a sense of belonging, and creating a shared purpose?
- What relationship stage are we at with our clients – are they truly loyal, or just waiting for the next best thing?

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- How can we use the tools that are available to us to learn more about each other so that we can create deeper relationships?