

## Business Development in a Pandemic - It's All about the Relationship



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While COVID-19 has changed the nature of the opportunities to empower your practice, it has not changed the basic premise that has and will always be the driver of growing your practice – exceptional client relationships.

To reach this conclusion we need to shift perspective and look at the provision of legal services through the “eyes” of your clients. The following are the four key perspectives of their value proposition that they see the services you provide through:

1. **Price** - perceived cost-benefit
2. **Time** - speed of your response
3. **Service** - how I am made to feel
4. **Quality** - how I see your product

It is important to remember that the weighting of the individual perspectives is dynamic and not static, often changing from matter to matter. The change in the weighting is often a result of the strategic and/or emotional importance that the client places on the matter.



In all the various value proposition combinations the one constant is SERVICE because in many ways it is the easiest that can be discerned by clients.

In a real sense, the only complexity to exceptional client service is the failure to execute. The failure stems in most cases from not having connected the following:

**Exceptional Client Service**



**Exceptional Client Relationship**

Irrespective of pandemic or non-pandemic times, the four pillars upon which exceptional client relationships are founded on are:

1. **Know your client**
  - a. Understand your client's business.
  - b. Collaboratively identify their needs and solutions for them.
  - c. Use social media to learn personal details of your clients.
  
2. **Connect with your client**
  - a. Timely return their phone calls, emails, and texts.
  - b. Keep your client informed of breaking news that may impact them.
  - c. Attend client internal meetings at no charge.
  
3. **Appreciate your client**
  - a. Make sure bills are accurate, reflect the value of services rendered, and are in a format agreed to by the client.
  - b. Let clients know what tasks can be done better or cheaper by others.
  - c. Never waste your client's time.
  
4. **Listen to your client**
  - a. Ask them what success is from their perspective on a matter.
  - b. Engage active listening skills - which can only be done when you are not talking.
  - c. Ask clients how often they want to receive communication on the matter AND in what preferred format.

Just because you are not currently able to do some of these things in person does not mean you can not nurture these professional relationships.

So, what are some of the things you can do in the current pandemic (and afterwards) to strengthen your client relationships?

While I am not advocating that you must do all of them to have exceptional relationships (you still must practice law and earn a living). Some combination of the activities listed can serve you well:

***...what are some of the things you can do in the current pandemic...***

- Attend professional and industry virtual events and reach out to clients afterwards to discuss their take on the event.
- Schedule periodic video social meetings with clients and always lead with personal sharing.
- Engage in virtual speaking opportunities and advise clients of the event and invite them to participate. If they cannot attend, share the materials afterwards.
- Place periodic phone calls to clients (especially those not inclined to the use of video conferencing).
- Utilize social media to both follow clients and share trends and developments in their areas of interest.

- Renew/touch base with acquaintances, colleagues, and classmates who are potential referral sources.
- Repurpose thought leaders' content to clients that may be useful to them (it maybe someone else's content but clients remember who shared it with them).
- Sponsor or co-sponsor virtual events (even with clients) - bigger “bang for the buck” as significantly less expensive than sponsoring in-person events.
- Invite clients to virtual “cocktail” events - consider delivering refreshments to them so they feel compelled to participate.
- Create your own YouTube platform for informational videos on various areas of expertise or services offered by you and your firm.
- Confirm your clients' contact information with them and make sure the firm's mailing list reflects this information.

One of the unintentional side benefits of working on creating exceptional client relationships in the era of COVID-19 is that it may be good for your own mindset and wellbeing.

The simple truth of business development during a pandemic is captured by the following phrase:

*“Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.”*

or *“The more things change, the more they stay the same.”*

- Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr

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