THE MATTE PAD

MARKETING KNOW-HOW FOR THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Consultative Sales Lead to Longer Relationships for Law Firms

Simply "closing the sale" is short-sighted; by taking a consultative approach, you can create a lasting client relationship.

This blog focuses primarily on ways you can market your firm, increase awareness and drive more potential customers to your firm through a variety of tools and methods. But we wanted to create a post on how to "close the sale" since all the marketing in the world is for naught if you can't turn it into real business from real clients. To get this perspective, we asked Brian Sullivan, a business development coach to give us his perspective.

When I hear the phrase "closed the sale," I think of a transactional type of business relationship; one where the efforts leading to the client's commitment are focused on that magical moment when the client agrees to purchase your services. Which we all know is the ultimate goal and the measurement of success for individual attorneys and the firm as a whole.

In the competitive world of professional services, a critical component to the client deciding to work with you versus a competitor begins immediately with their initial perception of how their life or business will be better with you on their team. Therefore, it is important to understand their perspective from the very beginning of the relationship. What are they looking for when comparing you and other attorneys and other firms? If you really want to stand out, it's important to quickly separate yourself from the *transactional* attorneys and show your more *consultative* approach.

Let's first define both terms.

Transactional:

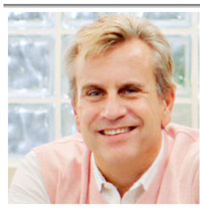
- You are viewed as a "commodity solution" by your client; you can be replaced at any time because from the client's perspective you are the same as the next firm.
- Traditionally margins are lower and there is a constant fear that the client may leave you for "greener pastures" if the right firm comes calling.
- Any new billing opportunities with current clients are treated as "new," requiring you and your firm to "jump through hoops" to gain or retain existing business.
- In a transactional relationship, the ability to forecast new billings is suspect at best because of the vulnerable position you have created with your client.
- All of the above can be very draining while taking up valuable resources that could go elsewhere for new client opportunities.

Consultative:

- By mastering your interaction skills, you understand your client's key business drivers while at the same time positioning and distinguishing yourself and your firm's capabilities for that specific client.
- You have earned the right to ask the challenging questions because of your ability to "pull" vs. "push" while interacting with your client, demonstrating to them that they are the focus of your attention while you identify their specific needs.
- The client needs you and sees you as an expert, not only as an attorney but also because you understand their business from every perspective.
- New billing opportunities are a simple *conversation* vs a *pitch* and are *implemented* rather than *closed* because of the expertise you have shown in the past.
- Resources are positioned proactively and the client sees your firm's ability to anticipate their needs which tends to further solidify the relationship.
- The reality is clients are seeking a safe decision, and you can successfully create that environment by mastering the ability to present yourself and your firm as *consultants* at all times.

I always tell my clients that they need to change their thought process from pushing to pulling. Pulling is when you ask questions that draw upon the client's emotions, requiring them to elaborate or expound on their thoughts and feelings. Asking *visionary* questions can be a very effective way of doing this. *"Where do you see your company going in the next five years and how do you see our firm helping you get there?"* It's not enough to ask the right questions either. Every aspect of your communication style must embrace this method to effectively implement a *consultative* approach to client development and management.

It's always best to *implement* and minimize doubt vs. *push* and wonder!



Welcome to The Matte Pad! Here you'll find tips, trends and tools to help the busy legal marketing professional. I hope you'll find this content valuable and practical. Information on the latest social media trends, creative ideas and marketing strategies that you can use at your law firm or in your legal marketing department.