

Client Value New Year's Resolutions

If you are a regular at your local gym, you may have been annoyed on New Year's Day when your workout sanctuary was suddenly filled with gung-ho exercisers determined to meet their 2019 fitness goals. With physical fitness being one of the [most popular new year's resolutions](#), this comes as no surprise—but by March, when the newness of resolutions has died down, the gym head count will likely look almost exactly as it did in December.

Though we lawyers may not *all* be able to maintain a six pack in 2019 (kudos to those of you who can), a resolution worth keeping this year is that of client service and value. Making clients happy doesn't have to mean a drastic shift in practice like going to the gym every day when you've been on the couch for the past four years. Small shifts in perspective and practice can make a huge impact on the client experience, resulting in both happier clients and happier lawyers. Here are four basic steps you can take to invest in your clients' happiness—and subsequently, your own.

- **Amp Up Your Client Communication Strategy**

Did you know that failure to communicate is one of the most common client complaints? With this complaint so widespread, it's highly likely that even if you feel your firm's client communication protocols are outstanding, there is still room for improvement. Sit down with your team and come up with reasonable client communication standards and then implement them. At every client intake meeting, explain how long it will take your firm to respond to messages, how and when you'll provide updates about the progress of a matter, where clients can go to get their billing questions answered, etc. Offer answers to questions they may not have considered—for example, who are the personnel from your firm that the client can expect to communicate with frequently? Will you send an email at every milestone so they always know the status of their matter? Creating a standard communication policy and sticking with it makes it easier for you to meet (and exceed) your clients' expectations—and will create happier clients in the long run.

- **Embrace Change and Technology**

Recently, a judge [actually penalized lawyers](#) for not using artificial intelligence (AI) during discovery, ruling that: "If artificial intelligence sources were employed, no doubt counsel's preparation time would have been significantly reduced." This case is a testament to the storm to come: Legal research and other traditionally resource-intensive tasks can and should be expedited by using technology. Clients don't want to pay for manual research if they don't have to. Don't let your clients find billing issues to argue with you about—make sure you're streamlining all your processes from the outset.

- **Collecting Feedback Will Forever Be Key**

Some may roll their eyes at this one, but *many* law firms don't do this, and it's a missed opportunity. If you don't already, [consider implementing a standardized process for collecting feedback](#) so you are consistently getting input from the clients you serve. Whether it's an online questionnaire, a follow-up phone call or an

exit interview (conducted by a firm member not tied directly to the case or, preferably, an independent third party), learning about your clients' experience with your firm is paramount to success. Many client complaints can be fixed with small tweaks here and there, but if you don't know about them, they can become much bigger problems—and ignoring them means possibly receiving negative reviews later on. Be proactive and face criticism head-on so you can address it immediately.

- **Say No to The Wrong Prospects So You Can Say Yes to The Right Ones**

There is a time and place to say no to a prospective client. Whether you have a personal conflict with the prospect, the matter is not within your area of expertise or the prospect demonstrates characteristics from the outset that lead you to believe they will be difficult to deal with, it is okay to turn away potential income if the bad seems to outweigh the potential good. Some clients are not going to be happy no matter how hard you work, and those are the people who are likely to drag your firm's name through the dirt, whether or not you deserve it.

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