

First Impressions: Prospects and Marketing for Law Firms

When it comes to turning prospects into clients, and one-off visitors into loyal customers, first impressions can be of crucial importance.

Eight Easy Marketing Ideas for Law Firms

Marketing for law firms is all about creating the right image and conveying your professionalism and principles, so that there is no doubt that they will be in 'safe hands' with you. Here are eight ways to impress from the beginning of a relationship:

1. Keep a scrap book of testimonials in reception

Testimonials are an invaluable way of building credibility with new and potential clients. The power of someone else's endorsement over and above your own should not be underestimated, and yet many firms overlook the importance of getting testimonials in front of clients. A good way of doing this is to keep a scrap book, easily visible and accessible when people enter your premises.

2. Keep a scrap book of client press clippings in reception

Likewise, whenever a client's case is reported in the press (local, national, or sector-specific), this provides you with a priceless (and free!) marketing opportunity. You should do all you can to use these opportunities to raise your profile and build trust with new faces. As well as posting links to press coverage on your website, keeping a scrap book of hard copies in reception will draw attention to your successes.

3. Undertake a review of reception and other areas that come under scrutiny on first visits

There is nothing worse than being introduced to a new or prospective service provider, and then being asked to wait in a cold, uncomfortable reception area with 'budget coffee' and seemingly disinterested staff. This is your showcase area and must help to embody your service standards, to which you commit in your promotional and welcome material. Therefore, reception must convey an image of professionalism and care. Reception should be staffed at all times, and staff must be trained in client care. This includes dealing with visitors in a professional but friendly manner, and answering the phone promptly and with an agreed 'service level' script. You may also want to consider showing clients into a meeting room straight away, providing them with privacy rather than keeping them waiting in a busy reception area.

4. Treat your own people as you would expect to treat a valued client

All firms profess to consider their people as their 'greatest asset'. However, in many places this does not ring true – and this is not a healthy situation for anyone. You must bear in mind, for example, that reception is not only used by visitors. It is also frequented by your own staff, applicants and recruits. Therefore, you must take into account the needs of your people when it comes to designing your 'showcase' areas as much as you do those of your clients and prospects. Your people will also not be happy if they walk through a 'luxury' reception to inadequate staff facilities. You cannot successfully portray an image of client care if this image is not a true reflection of your firm's principles.

5. Always introduce the client to the key team members

It is not particularly comforting to receive a call regarding your legal matters from someone whose name you have never even heard. So, it is important to make sure that anyone dealing with a particular piece of client work is introduced to that client, if they are likely to need to discuss the matter with the client. This also provides a reason to keep in regular contact with the client, obtain regular feedback and promote the firm's other service offerings, which may be of interest.

6. Research yours client or prospect's business

When it comes to commercial clients, it couldn't be easier to keep up to date with happenings in their world. All it takes is a few minutes' internet research on a semi-regular basis, or prior to a scheduled meeting or call, and you will come across as a consummate professional. Moreover, this again gives you the excuse to get in touch and flag up potential areas in which your firm could be of service. This is a habit that all professionals should be in.

7. Provide new clients with a 'Welcome Pack'

This allows you to begin the relationship on the right foot – and on your terms. Here you can set out clearly what they can expect from you and, likewise, what you expect from them regarding availability, input and (not least!) payment. You can impress with your professionalism by giving them their appointment time, a map and directions, a list of information and documentation to bring with them and a short questionnaire on what they need to consider. You can also include an 'Our Team' section, easily compiled from your website profiles.

8. Give the client the option of methods of communication

Many firms will have a varied range of client profiles – from busy corporate clients to families and private clients of any description. Busy professionals and businesspeople will often like to be contacted by email, or on their mobile while on the go. Conversely, you may also have clients in other areas who do not have internet access or a mobile phone. Therefore, allowing the client to decide how they are communicated (sometimes by different methods in different situations) is a question both of client service and practicality, and further enhances your 'client-centred approach'.



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