

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” – Hellen Keller

I believe the key to a successful and happy practice is rooted in having strong relationships with those people in our professional orbit. The stronger the relationship, the more value and satisfaction it provides. Everything else to me is secondary. The best and strongest relationships are nurtured through regular and consistent contact. Here are some key professional relationships that we all have, and ideas for sustaining these relationships for maximum long-term success and happiness.

**Staff.** To me, my relationship with my staff is the single-most important professional relationships I have. I believe therefore it is important to treat them like gold. Since they spend so much time helping you make money, it is crucial that you have strong relationships with all of your staff members. Get to know their spouses and kids' names. Know if they have any pets, and whether they have any hobbies or pursuits. Be sure to ask them about these things to show you care. Also, give them compliments regularly, and give them shout-outs. If they have a win, praise them so they know they are valued and appreciated. Always seek to make them feel good and make them feel valued. Failing to get to know them and showing them they are important to you is a sure-fire way to lose them to an employer who will.

**Clients.** Clients need to always be treated with 5-star service. We all know that client communication is really, really important. Yet so many firms ignore this vital maxim. Make sure your staff knows to contact clients regularly in order to provide case updates. Also, encourage them to listen for clues when speaking with clients. If a client recently had a big win, make sure your staff sends to the client a card congratulating them. If they had a recent death in the family, send flowers. Show them they are not just a file in your office. Also, make sure to stay in touch after the representation concludes. Little things like birthday calls, father's/mother's day cards, and valentine's day cards make you show up differently so you will remain top-of-mind whenever they, or someone they know, needs your legal services in the future.

**Attorneys.** Make sure you stay in touch with your referring attorneys, or else the relationship can and will weaken and possibly die. Regular and consistent contact with referring attorneys is really important. Aim to have coffee with each attorney that refers you cases every quarter. Send out a regular email blast that goes out to your list of referring attorneys, as well as a newsletter that goes out to these attorneys. Always seek to provide value in your communications to them, instead of making it about you and what you want to gain. If you see they have had a recent win on a case, send them a handwritten card congratulating them. As well, make sure it is a two-way street with referrals. If an attorney is sending you cases, make it a point to send that attorney cases as well. And when you do receive a referred case, be sure send a handwritten thank you card, and be sure to give to the referring attorney regular updates on the status of the referred case. Additionally, if your jurisdiction allows for attorney referral fees, personally hand-deliver the referral fee check to the attorney. These little touches will make you stand out to your referring attorneys.

**Vendors.** When dealing with any type of vendor, make sure they do what they say they are going to do by holding them accountable. Regular and consistent communication is so important. Frequently a relationship with a vendor can sour over poor communication. For example, if you have a marketing agency, have regular scheduled calls with that vendor. Make sure that they are delivering on what they promise to deliver for you. Accountability is really important here so make sure your relationships

provide the value you pay for an expect, and if they do not, cut bait and find a vendor who can deliver for you.