

Customer RELATIONS

FIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE CLIENT COMMUNICATION DURING THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND.

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CLIENT COMMUNICATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has been more important than before with the in-person component often taken out of the equation or infrequently used. The gap has been filled with leveraging technology and developing new and improved methods of communication, such as 24/7 receptionist service, texting, online portals, and more. Here we examine five ways to ensure quality communication during challenging times.

Texting

Tools like texting have become increasingly used in professional settings. “Most people, 90[%], open a text within three minutes, compared with the 20[%] of people who even open an email,” according to *PCMag*. In fact, texts have a response rate of 45% compared to email’s 6%. Additionally, a text is responded to faster than an email.¹ With clients’ email inboxes overcrowded, a text reminder or communication will elicit a faster response. Consider trying text for business in two ways to start: 1) consultation reminders and 2) requests for client reviews. With business texting software, firms can text from their computers and mobile devices and reach clients more effectively.

24/7 Receptionist Services

During a time that human interaction has been significantly reduced, having human reassurance is critical. The difference between a potential client or

client leaving a voicemail versus leaving a message with a live person definitely brings out various levels of reassurance that communication has been transferred. Ensuring that your clients will always receive a professional and timely response is key in engaging and maintaining client relationships. Although cost prohibitive to have staff 24/7, a phone answering service solves the problem. With a 24/7 answering service, calls are answered at all times, can even be connected to your firm’s customer relationship management software, and make clients feel more assured of a timely response.

Online Scheduling

Consumers have grown accustomed to researching options online and want to be able to move quickly with a service or product of interest. The ability to schedule and pay for an appointment instantly online will attract the demographic that has grown accustomed with the DIY, instant gratification by scheduling, paying, and further connecting with a law firm without speaking to a human, especially if that can be done at all hours of the day. Although apparently contradictory to the prior key above, many clients are growing accustomed to humanless interaction if it involves faster around-the-clock results. Overall, for many clients, being able to book a service online is an important aspect of their experience with the firm and can set you apart.

Client Portals

According to the *2021 Clio Legal Trends Report*, growing firms are 41% more likely to use client portals. During the pandemic, the consumer became more sophisticated and digital-savvy and more accustomed to client portals. With client portals offering a convenient, centralized way for lawyers and their clients to communicate, both parties can consolidate all information relevant to a client’s case in one secure and always-accessible location.² Clients can fill out intake forms, upload any documents, and

send messages. Client portals not only ensure greater security but also have made practicing law more efficient.

Attorney-Client Agreements and Electronic Signatures

When my firm started using electronic documents for attorney-client agreements almost five years ago, we saw a dramatic increase in converting new clients as the friction to paper signing was eliminated. The Clio report found that “[Sixty-two percent] of legal professionals supported electronic documents and e-signatures.”³ Firms adopting these solutions allow clients to retrieve and sign docs from anywhere, making their legal services more convenient and less stressful than their competitors who have not adapted their services.⁴

Overall, communication is invaluable, and trust is never more important than during a crisis. Utilizing these five ways to improve client communication will ensure success, even beyond the pandemic. **TBJ**

NOTES

1. Sherin Shibu, *Businesses, Take Note: Your Customers Prefer Texts*. PCMag (Sept. 2, 2020) <https://www.pcmag.com/news/businesses-take-note-your-customers-prefer-texts>.
2. Andrew Cardy, *Highlights from the 2021 Legal Trends Report*, Clio Blog. <https://www.clio.com/blog/highlights-from-2021-legal-trends-report/>.
3. *Id.*
4. Ruby L. Powers, *Build and Manage Your Successful Immigration Law Practice (Without Losing Your Mind)* (2019), <https://tinyurl.com/rssvkd3>.



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