

Nurturing Your Professional Relationships

By Christopher Earley

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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 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. Below 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 relationship I have. It is important to treat your staff like gold. Because your staff spends so much time helping you make money, it is crucial that you have strong relationships with all 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 to show them they are important to you is a surefire way to lose them to an employer who will.

Clients. Clients need always to be treated with five-star service. We all know that client communication is really, really important. Yet, so many firms ignore this fact. Make sure your staff knows to contact clients regularly to provide case updates. Also, encourage them to listen for clues when speaking with clients. When clients have a big win, make sure your staff sends 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 keep you top-of-mind whenever they, or someone they know, need 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 crucial. Aim to have coffee every quarter with each attorney who refers you cases. Send out a regular email blast and a newsletter to your list of referring attorneys. Always seek to provide value in your communications with 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 to send a handwritten thank you card, and be sure to give 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

Accountability is key here, so make sure your relationships provide the value you pay for and expect, and if they do not, cut bait and find a vendor who can deliver for you.

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Authors



Christopher Earley

Christopher Earley (www.chrisearley.com) is an author, entrepreneur, and personal injury attorney serving clients throughout Massachusetts.

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