The Complete Guide to Growing a Law Firm

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The question “how to grow a law firm” is a common one, and it’s no wonder—running a law firm is tough, and growing a law firm is even tougher, especially today.

For many firms, the challenges that hinder growth—like the costs of starting a law firm in the first place, struggling to acquire new clients, competing with other firms, and having no time to focus on the business side of things—can become so overwhelming that law firm growth becomes stagnant. If this sounds like your firm, you’re not alone.

Whether you want to drive revenue growth, meet growing demand, or simply afford to hire support to better manage our new reality, we’ll walk you through advice for growing a law firm. This post features advice from Hamra Law Group’s Abraham Hamra: A Reisman Award winner who grew his revenues to over $850,000 with an initial investment of $250.

How can I grow my law practice?

Being proactive, delegating to the right people and technologies, and—above all—having a plan will be key to growing your law firm. Letting go can be tough, but you won’t be able to grow your practice alone.

1. Learn to delegate

While a strong work ethic is admirable, it’s not always in your (or your firm’s) best interest when it comes to growth—especially if you’re too busy to respond to potential clients or too busy to market your services. Chances are, you’re doing work that doesn’t *really* need to be done by you. Delegating could free up significant time, and lead to opportunities for growth.

Assess your work tasks, and challenge whether you’re the one who should be doing them. Come up with a list of questions to ask yourself when you’re unsure if a task can be delegated. Write them down, and refer back to them. Here are some questions to get you started:

- Could someone else adequately complete this task?
- Could someone else complete this task faster than me?
- How much will it cost for me to complete the task? How much for a staff member?

- Are there any ethical issues with delegating this task?

2. Create efficient systems

Your law firm needs to run efficiently to avoid wasted time and resources, and to create a positive environment for clients and staff. Clear systems are the answer.

“The way I systemize my practice is almost like a workflow operation, in which I’m responsible for intake strategy,” he explains. “Once the client comes in, I bring in the client business development, sign them up, and I give them to one of my associates, who is in charge of distributing the work around the office.”

Abraham and his team follow set workflows from which the firm’s operations flow smoothly in the right direction. “Once you have the system in place, then it’s about acquiring new clients and hiring new associates to fulfill the needs of overwork, or being overworked,” Abraham says.

3. Hire when the time is right

Without the right people to depend on, growing a law firm is an uphill battle. Don’t be afraid to build a team that can support the business, even as the business is growing.

“I mean, that’s what the firm is. It’s people. It’s a combination of people, working together for an end goal. And that end goal is growing the business, and providing quality, legal representation to my clientele,” Abraham says.

Similarly, for Kevin Vela of Vela Wood P.C.—a firm that he grew to 14 attorneys and increased annual revenue by at least 40% every year for nearly a decade—one of the keys to sustainable growth was to proactively hire employees as the firm gained new clients. If you wait to hire until you’re overloaded with clients and desperate for help, it could be too late, and be counter-productive to your law firm’s growth.

“I think if you get in a position where you’re so stressed and you’ve got too much work on your plate and you’re at the point where you have to add someone, you’re just adding something else to your to-do list that you don’t have time to do,” Kevin says.

4. Outsource what you can’t hire for

Hiring full-time associates isn’t the only way to support your growing business. As this guide explains, legal process outsourcing is a way to delegate tasks (like document review, scanning, and non-substantive court appearances) outside of your staff—whether to other

experts, freelance lawyers, or other qualified professionals.

By taking these tasks off of your plate, outsourcing can lighten your firm's workload, so that you and your staff can focus on your priority work.

5. Use technology

Not all delegation means hiring people—you can leverage technology to help you automate or streamline repetitive tasks. For example:

- Clio Payments, for example, helps streamline routine payments data entry (such as recording legal credit card payments, marking bills as paid, and modifying account balances).
- Clio Grow automates and simplifies your firm's client intake process with tools like easy online scheduling, online intake forms, and e-signatures. Clio Grow also has many features to help market your firm.
- Virtual receptionists like Ruby can handle the work of answering client calls so nothing gets missed.

Firms who use tech grow faster: According to the *2020 Legal Trends Report,* firms using online credit card payments, client portals, and client intake solutions together consistently earned over 20% more revenue per lawyer each month—and as much as *39% more* in August—compared to firms who hadn't adopted these technologies.

For Abraham, automating processes at his firm helps to strengthen his system and smooth out workflows. "... it gives you an ability to track and hold people accountable for not following through with the system. And it makes it easy because you can print out reports," he says.

Technology like Clio also helps Abraham keep his firm running more efficiently, cutting down on time wasters and making processes more seamless. "...when I go from Clio Grow, into Clio Manage, and I dole out tasks, there isn't that opportunity for small talk, that happens through the transfer of cases. So technology kind of takes that element out of it."

6. Invest in marketing and branding

If you want your practice to grow, you need more clients. Start by reviewing these essential steps, and consider these tips for marketing to facilitate growth:

1. Know (or establish) your brand.

Your law firm needs a clear identity to successfully market it. Ensure that tangible elements of your brand (like your firm logo, colors, etc) are consistent. You can further strengthen your brand with these tips.

2. Establish a lead-generation process

With the right strategies, you can set up a system to attract potential clients to your firm online—and, ultimately, convert those potential clients into new clients. Learn more about how to develop a reliable lead generation process.

3. Have a client-centered law firm website.

An effective website makes it easier for clients to find you and connect with you online—giving them a more client-centered experience from the start—as you can see with these best-of-the-best examples. A good law firm website should:

- Be easy to navigate
- Present services you offer clearly
- Showcase strong branding for your practice.

4. Leverage strong SEO to show up in searches.

You'll also need a system to draw people to your website. Optimizing your law firm website for local search engine optimization (SEO) can yield big traffic growth. Here's a five-step guide to help you get started.

5. Find a marketing system that fits your firm.

For Abraham, marketing includes more old-school techniques—because they're authentic and work for his firm.

"The marketing campaigns that I've had until now consisted of sending out direct mailers, word of mouth, and telling everybody I see that I'm a lawyer, and what I do," he explains.

Law firm growth strategies that work

Below are a few more of Abraham's tried and true tips for growing his practice:

Put yourself out there

"I do a lot of cold calling myself, especially when I'm feeling like I'm a little slow," he explains. "I'll pick up the phones, start calling businesses, introducing myself, explaining what I do, and hope to score a consultation or a meeting. And when I get to that consultation, I have a 95% closing rate."

Ask clients for referrals

Being proactive with your client relationships is also key when thinking about how to grow a law firm. This way, your clients will be there for you when you need it.

"It's essential," Abraham says. "If I'm not proactive, I probably wouldn't have been able to build the practice, to the size I did, in the number of years I did."

"I would call clients and sometimes I'd ask them, 'Hey, I'd like a referral. I'm slow this month. Do you have any people you can refer me?' And it'd surprise you. Your clients like honesty. They'd say, 'Yeah, of course.' And they'll give you a referral."

Reach out to clients proactively

Being willing to reach out, help (even, sometimes, for free), and nurture that relationship can be an investment in future firm growth.

"... sometimes I'd call my clients, and ask 'How's business? I heard there was an issue with tariffs,'" Abraham recalls. "And he would start expressing, or she would start expressing, all the pain about getting hit with this 20% tariff, they don't know what to do. And I help talk them through the business decision that they're making. It's not necessarily legal advice, and I won't bill for it. It is a gap in that billable time, because I just want that relationship to be more friendly."

"But on the flip side, if any issue ever arises in that client's business, the first attorney he's calling is me. And I'm not looked at as the labor attorney, or the real estate attorney, but rather as their attorney."

Be responsive

When thinking about how to grow a law firm, it's important to be responsive to clients and potential clients. As outlined in the most recent *Legal Trends Report*, a test emailing 500 law firms to check their responsiveness came back with dismal results: 67% of law firms didn't respond at all.

Being responsive is important to Abraham: “I have anxiety if I don’t return a client’s phone call within 24 hours. I really do,” he says, adding that clients need him to be responsive to alleviate their anxiety about their legal matter.

Be empathetic

As Jack Newton discusses in *The Client-Centered Law Firm*, it’s important to remember that your clients are humans—and dealing with legal issues is stressful for them. Empathy helps your firm stand out and grow.

For Abraham, it’s simple: “just really care about your client. Make them family. Give out your cell phone number. A lot of lawyers hate that. Every client has my cell phone number. Respond to them, answer their phone calls, even if it doesn’t have to do with law, don’t get agitated, and just give them the answer.”

Adapt to take on new opportunities

When focusing on how to grow a law firm, it’s important to be attuned to your clients’ needs and new opportunities—and adapt accordingly.

This spurred a shift early in his career from being a criminal defense attorney to refocusing his whole practice to corporate law, commercial litigation, employment, and employment defense. The shift started when his father told him about a friend who was being sued under the Fair Labor Standards Act and showed him the letter that his friend received from a lawyer advertising his services.

“I looked into this area of law and I saw it was exploding in New York: there were about 40 cases a week filed. Then, I kind of adapted that letter that the attorney sent. I took on that case, I figured out how to really practice in this area … it’s a very complicated area. But after months and months of research and study, I became competent in the area. I got the idea of the marketing that was being done to attract clients. And I instituted that into my firm almost immediately, within a few months.”

Reach out for help when you need it

No one expects you to be a one-person growth machine. It’s actually the opposite—you’ll likely be more successful if you are able to reach out for help and guidance when you need direction.

When Abraham was starting out, he didn’t let his freshness scare him away from potential business. Instead, he called more experienced attorneys and asked for their opinions. By getting that help, he was able to effectively do his job, without being tentative about

accepting work.

“And any case that I wasn’t familiar with, I would do the same thing,” he says. “Call lawyers, get some mentors, try to understand, research online.”

Build a strong culture

A strong culture, filled with people that you trust, is essential for law firm growth. “At the end of the day, I mean that’s what the firm is,” he says. “It’s people. It’s a combination of people, working together for an end goal. And that end goal is growing the business, and providing quality, legal representation to my clientele.”

Believe in yourself

Taking on the task of growing a law firm is no small feat, so have confidence in yourself and stay focused on your firm—and don’t worry about what your competitors think.

“... I don’t even waste time thinking about what other competitors may think I’m doing right or doing wrong,” Abraham says. “I’m always open to getting criticism, and learning what I’m doing right and what I’m doing wrong to change it. But to try to predict what somebody else may think about me or my practice, or how I got to this place, not something I even waste time or mind power on, because it’s distracting, and it could be very negative.”

And, when it comes to law firm growth, Abraham has made sacrifices—but it has been worth the effort.

“It takes time, effort, blood. Well, no blood, just sweat, and a lot of sacrifice..., he says. “Especially in the first couple of years of building the practice, no matter what anybody wants to say about optimizing, or balance, work-life balance—that’s all-important, but that doesn’t come until you’ve built a base and built a foundation.”

Conclusion and additional resources for how to grow a law firm

Getting more clients, growing your law firm, and becoming a success story takes work, strategy, and possibly a shift in perspective—but the results will be worth it. Much of law firm growth boils down to strategic delegation, so start by coming up with a system to facilitate growth and prioritize marketing to bring in new clients. Nurture your client relationships, and be proactive and responsive. Don’t be afraid to hire or outsource staff, and take advantage of tech to automate where you can.

If you're looking for inspiration on how to grow your law firm, our Customer Stories are a great place to start. You'll find real examples of firms like Shuaib Ahmed's, who leveraged technology to cut overhead and grow revenues by 1,400% in his first year of operations.

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.