How I Doubled My Law Firm's Revenue (and Where We're Headed Next)

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This year has been a breakout year for my practice. Revenues have more than doubled year-over-year, and projected revenue for next year should result in another year-over-year doubling of revenues—and that's without adding a single lawyer or staff member.

More broadly, we have grown from a firm with $250,000 in revenue to a firm that will have $1 million in revenue in just four years.

I talked about the strategic approach that my firm has taken to achieve these results at ClioCon. Here are a few of the highlights:

Choose a practice management software that works for you

Our first, and I believe most important, decision was to select Clio as our practice management software. With Clio, I could effectively manage client interaction and billing in a way that set the firm apart from the larger law firms that are invariably on the other side of our cases. Improving billing and communication with technology was our first focus. Without those—a firm cannot succeed.

Brand yourself to stand out

To help our firm stand out, we implemented branding to distinguish ourselves from every other firm called "Law Offices of ..." Our domain name became our firm name. It is short and easy to remember.

The presentation of the name became focused on what we wanted to communicate—cream city bricks (the building blocks of nearly every building that has withstood the test of time in Milwaukee) combined with the burgundy color most often used in painted on advertising of the past. We wanted to communicate the solid foundation of our skills in the law. We also combined that with a short, clear statement to clearly communicate why people hire us over others: "because trials happen."

We started marketing campaigns using blogs, videos, and social media to get the word out about our firm.

The final touch was to focus our content on current technologies to demonstrate that we have old world skills, but that we also take full advantage of the technologies available to effectively and efficiently deliver legal services.

Which brings me to my next point ...

Continue to implement new technology and processes

Since we've opened our doors, we have consistently added processes and integrations that worked for us.

We started to accept credit cards. We used text messages and email communications in combination with Ruby Receptionists to better serve our clients through prompt and individualized communication.

All of that has allowed us to provide better client service while also running our law firm more efficiently. Case in point: We accomplished all of the above and still averaged more than 1,600 billable hours per year of my time. While we averaged 1,600 billable hours—approximately 1,000 of which were hourly matters and the rest on contingent or alternative fee matters—we had effective revenues of more than 2,000 billable hours in 2016 and more than 3,500 in 2017.

That growth was accomplished by establishing a foundation of hourly rate work, and then building on that with contingent fee and alternative fee arrangements to maximize revenues and profits.

Attend conferences and implement what you've learned

This year's ClioCon inspired us to further transform the firm this year with the vision of providing better results more efficiently for our clients. Here's what we've learned:

Build your website to be inclusive

This year our website will be reconfigured to load faster, especially on handheld devices. Google uses the mobile-friendliness of your website as one of the signals for ranking in search results, so a pleasant (and that means, in part, a fast) mobile experience is key.

Additionally, our website and blogs will incorporate voice-activation and voice-presentation of content. We will also be incorporating image descriptions to make our site more accessible and easier to use for clients of all abilities. As Haben Girma pointed out in her conference keynote, there are 1.3 billion people with disabilities worldwide, so providing service that is accessible to everyone will help law firms reach more people.

Focus on SEO to serve clients better

Our blog and video content will be driven this year by the queries made on search engines related to lawyers, the legal system, and mediation. This content focus is for two reasons.

First, if we are truly going to transform the legal profession for good, we need to answer the questions that clients and potential clients search.

Second, trying to imagine what is important in decision-making for clients and potential clients, jurors and potential jurors, is an unnecessary use of time. What clients and potential clients, jurors and potential jurors, really want to know can be seen in search query data readily available from major search engines.

To grow and sustain growth—indeed to remain relevant in this time of rapid disruption, both through technology and through frustration or anger with technology—we must engage the disrupted. We must serve as many clients and jurors as we can by answering the questions they have, not what we think those questions should be.

When it comes to blogging, write more of what your audience wants

The two most read blog posts that I have written were both written on the plane ride back to Milwaukee from New Orleans this year. Accordingly, we are changing the focus of our blog and video content.

I felt so inspired that while I was exhausted from the conference, I felt the need to communicate two experiences that had a fundamental impact upon me as a lawyer and a person.

The blog posts were inspired by Haben Girma and Preet Bharara and their keynotes at the conference. One focused upon inclusion and the absolutely amazing experience of sharing my passion for dance with Haben at the House of Blues. The other focused upon the need for great lawyers to make a difference by become great mediators.

This year I will be focusing on inclusion to communicate better with jurors, clients, and judges. I will also be focusing significant energy on the newest part of my practice—mediation of business disputes.

A year of transformation ahead

This year will be a very challenging year for us. Transforming our practice in light of the growing changes in the legal industry as a whole is our next challenge in entrepreneurship.

I believe this is true both for Treblaw and for law firms everywhere. Executing this transformation effectively—in spite of any mistakes or failures along the way—will distinguish those of us who lead and truly succeed in the legal industry from those of us who will be relegated to a commodity driven existence.

We are excited to take on the challenge and look forward to implementing what we learned this year at ClioCon. From speakers during the sessions, interactions with vendors, the Clio team, and our colleagues in between sessions, we've gotten plenty of ideas to try.

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.