5 Big Ideas to Help Your Law Firm Stand Out, Straight From the Experts

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Some of the brightest and most talented minds in the legal tech industry converged for this year's ClioCon, providing actionable advice on how you (and other attorneys and legal professionals) can build a better law firm. From an unconventional call to be more curious about the ways data can improve your firm, to advice on how to run a client-centered practice, these are the top learnings that legal professionals can start to implement now.

1. Understanding client expectations (which aren't the same as your perceptions)

The gulf between how attorneys think about clients and their legal challenges and how clients think about themselves and their legal challenges is substantial, according to the *2018 Legal Trends Report*. In this Above the Law podcast, George Psiharis, Chief Operating Officer at Clio, discusses key findings from the report. For example, when asked how consumers wanted to learn the legal aspects of their case, most clients (55%) preferred an in-person sit down. Lawyers, on the other hand, assumed their clients would want to handle this step over the phone (44%) or via email (44%).

2. Embracing Big Data for better client outcomes

Stop treating Big Data like the Boogeyman and embrace the ways in which your practice can be more efficient and strategic with the help of aggregated information. That was the case made by presenters Ed Walters, CEO at Fastcase and adjunct professor at the Georgetown University Law Center, and Michael Sander, founder of Docket Alarm and director of analytics at Fastcase, in their presentation at the conference. They were also featured on a podcast, which you listen to here.

Data can help you see trends in various areas of law, which in turn can help you set expectations with your clients, argued Ed and Michael. For example, if you're a personal injury lawyer, you might want to look at data that could allow you to see the average, mean, and distribution numbers for a specific type of settlement, so you can then show your client where you would predict their settlement amount would fit.

3. Mastering the art of human-centered design

Design isn't just for artists anymore. Like writing and customer service, the core tenets of design—problem-solving and creating compelling solutions—are important for nearly all professionals, but this is especially true for lawyers.

Human-centered design is a philosophy that prioritizes curiosity for the audience receiving your design. This was at the core of Cat Moon's presentation of human-centered design for law. Cat, who coaches law firms, legal departments, and law schools on this design approach, believes curiosity and non-linear thinking—which lawyers haven't traditionally been taught to do—are actually powerful predecessors to innovation in the field.

Listen to Moon chat with host Jason Tashea, founder and director of Justice Codes, and criminal justice technology consultant at the Research and Evaluation Center at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

One key point for lawyers who want to employ human-centered design thinking? Get out of your box and start listening to your clients—i.e., develop a genuine curiosity for who they are and what you can learn. This, argues Moon, leads to more adept problem-solving, both for firms and their clients.

4. Turning your know-how into a scalable digital product

You're probably reading this post because you know you want to run a successful, progressive law firm, right? In 2018, that means stretching the reach of your firm beyond just the walls of your building or the expanse of your email distribution list. There's a whole wide world of helpful information out there, and lots of folks hungry for information that you already know. Law firm owners Jess Birken, owner of Birken Law Office, which helps nonprofits and the arts, and Megan Zavieh, owner of Zavieh Law and principal of State Bar Playbook, LLC, presented on exactly how to leverage this modern hunger for information for your benefit by turning your expertise as a lawyer into digital information products.

It's a process they've dubbed "productizing" and it can be as simple as producing a YouTube tutorial about your speciality or creating an e-book. Listen to their talk on Legal Talk Network.

5. Centering your clients for the best results

A core learning from this year's ClioCon was to get serious about how clients perceive your firm, your services, and their level of satisfaction with each. Jack Newton's opening keynote talked about a key indicator of customer satisfaction, the Net Promoter Score (NPS®), and why law firms currently average a pretty less-than-ideal 25. (Compare this to customer-centric tech brands like Amazon that average close to 70.)

Paying attention to measures like NPS® is just one part of running a client-centered law firm though. The essential tenants to this approach are to see things from your clients' perspective, genuinely empathize with your clients, think client-first, and to be an excellent communicator with your clients (that means not just talking, but listening, too).

About Clio

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