How Law Firms Can Benefit from Negative Feedback

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As a Product Manager at Clio, I spend my time talking to legal professionals who use Clio to understand how they use our product, and how we can improve our service for them. Lately, we've been asking more about the client experience and how our customers collect feedback from their clients.

As we saw in the *2018 Legal Trends Report*, while law firms may be eager to understand their clients better, they've struggled to get started: 37% of firms surveyed in the report didn't regularly collect feedback from clients, and 42% collected it only casually.

The value of negative feedback

In discussing client feedback, it became clear that the value of feedback was confusing. "We collect feedback via public reviews—but we only ask when we know the review will be positive," I was told time and time again. It makes sense: Public reviews are an important source of new business for law firms of all sizes.

But, if you only survey the clients you know will have good things to say about you, you miss out on a learning experience.

When Amazon.com launched its reviews service in 1995, vendors were upset at the possibility of negative reviews winding up on their products. This is an understandable reaction when thinking about the revenue impact this could have, but the vendors neglected to see the opportunity for improvement that presented itself. Though negative feedback is painful in the short term, it provides opportunity to address customer concerns, create a better product, and ultimately deliver an even better client experience.

Amazon, as we all know, has only grown more successful since then.

They aren't the only company who's succeeded as a result of collecting negative feedback either: Plenty of organizations across many industries take similar approaches.

For example, at Clio, we regularly conduct surveys with customers, and we're dedicated to understanding any negative feedback we receive. Through this practice we gain a deeper understanding of our customers and what is important to them, and iterate on our product and service to constantly provide what lawyers and legal professionals need to succeed.

The same can be said for the legal industry. By collecting feedback from all clients—not just those that are going to give you a five-star review—you can spot trends in your service, and work to make improvements.

How to get the most out of negative feedback

To get the most out of feedback from clients who weren't so happy with their experience at your firm, it's crucial to look at each comment. If clients consistently mention how great you are at clearly laying out your invoices, but are less pleased with the timeliness of communication, you know where you might spend extra effort with your next client.

On the other hand, when you receive glowing feedback about the case you just worked on, you can know for certain that that client would be a great candidate to reach out to and request a public review.

Each comment you receive, positive or negative, can help you gauge how you're performing and where you could make changes. In working to improve your client experience, you drive client satisfaction, leading to more positive reviews, more clients, and a stronger contribution to your bottom line.

Keep track of feedback with a Net Promoter Score (NPS®)

While detailed feedback from individuals is important for helping your firm improve, it's also worth keeping track of how satisfied your clients are with your services in general, so that you have a clear view into whether or not clients would recommend your firm.

A great tool for this is to keep track of your Net Promoter Score (NPS®), a metric commonly used to rate customer loyalty and satisfaction on a scale of -100 to +100.

For context, the *Legal Trends Report* found that the legal industry as a whole currently has an NPS® of 25, putting it in good company with airlines, wireless carriers, and credit card companies. Companies known for excellent customer service and stratospheric business growth, e.g., companies like Amazon, have NPS® scores in the 60's or higher.

The data doesn't lie: Law firms can be doing more to listen to and act on negative feedback. Legal professionals who leverage this valuable resource are set to build practices that stand out from the rest.

Learn more about tracking your firm's NPS® in our guide to NPS® for Law Firms.

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.