

What's your firm's most valuable asset?

It may surprise you to learn that it's your client database. Your database is one of the cheapest and easiest ways for you to grow your practice and increase profitability. Your database represents your past clients, most of whom, I imagine, have had a positive experience of dealing with your firm. They comprise a significant group of mostly local individuals that are best placed to provide you future business and possible recommendations. Yet in our experience, so few practices make any attempt to maintain or develop a relationship with this group.



Gone are the days when you could rely on clients' loyalty. With increasing competition, legal practices need to work hard to ensure that past clients return. This means that you have to treat them like a current client and communicate with them. In order to do this, you need to ensure:

- You have captured their correct contact details. This is a lot harder than it sounds. For example during a conveyancing transaction, you need to record the address they are moving to, not the one they moved from. In our experience, most databases do not do this;
- You need to capture e-mail addresses as e-mail is cheaper and more immediate than the post;
- You need to ensure you do not have duplications – so if the client undertakes more than one matter, they are not entered twice;
- You need to ensure those clients that have died are removed, particularly when you have carried out their probate;
- You need to ensure that you have input the data correctly so when you run a mail merge the letters will address your clients properly;

If you have managed to ensure that all the above are in place – congratulations - you probably have a mailing list. You now need to develop a database. This requires you to capture additional data about your clients so that you can use this for both analysis and promotion.

You can then consider starting to communicate with those clients. This could be a letter, a regular newsletter, a Christmas card or an e-mail. You can arrange events and invite certain relevant clients to them. If you are having a promotion about wills, for example, you can easily inform those clients who do not currently have a will.

Simply, you are endeavouring to generate an on-going relationship with your clients, so the next time they require legal services they will automatically think of you.

Developing your client database is one of the most effective and inexpensive forms of generating future business.

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