



▶ LOVING YOUR
MARKETING AGENCY 2



▶ LOVING THE THINGS
THAT CAN BE HARD TO
LOVE 4



▶ GOTTA LOVE DANNO
..... 8

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Legal Connection

KEEPING LEGAL PROFESSIONALS CONNECTED

Life's Too Short – Love Your Clients



February is the month of love. We buy roses, chocolate and send valentines to those we love. Why can't we take that sentiment to the work half of our lives? Why not create a business culture where you enjoy, dare I say, love your clients?

Stereotypes are generalizations but they are based on kernels of truth. Stereotypes about lawyers include being difficult, critical, intimidating, competitive, know-it-alls, traditional. Those negatives can also be seen in a more positive light. Those same lawyers can be persistent, intelligent and thorough. For many clients, their lawyer is their trusted advisor and the person they turn to in times of crisis or when really bad things happen to them.

As a legal technology consultant, most of my clients are lawyers. As a "recovering lawyer," someone once described my career as "the ultimate form of revenge" because I get to bill lawyers by the hour. If I got a dollar for every time I heard, "why would you work with lawyers,

they are so difficult?" I could have retired ages ago. The truth is most of the lawyers I have as clients and friends are intelligent and passionate about helping their clients in time of need.

Of course, there are exceptions to the smart, savvy lawyers I have as clients. One of the best lessons I have learned over the years had nothing to do with technology. Simply put: Every few years, fire your most difficult clients.

In most law firms, the 80-20 rule applies in many different ways to your clients. In this context, 80 per cent of your clients are easy and pleasant to work with, pay their bills on time and are polite with you and your staff. We all have had clients whose expectations are unrealistic or who are abusive or difficult. Ironically, in my experience, these same clients are the ones who try to negotiate a lower rate and then don't pay promptly or without additional requests to lower your fees.

Periodically, you should consider "firing" the most draining of your clients. Not only are they usually

bad for your cash flow but they can sap your staff's morale. In short, they are costing your firm in insidious ways and getting rid of them let's you spend time on the good clients or market to get new clients. Both of those are better uses of your time and energy.

The flipside of this also applies when it comes to engaging new clients. Take care to vet potential new clients and make sure they are a good fit for you and your firm. If you have set your clients expectations realistically and done your best and communicated consistently, you are unlikely to end up with an unhappy client. Whatever you do, if you have a bad feeling, trust your gut.

Happier clients are more likely to come back and refer their friends. Culling the miserable people from your practice will leave you and your staff happier and doing work that is appreciated.

Carol Schlein is the owner of [Law Office Systems](#) and is a 2019 VBA Literati re practice management.

Loving Your Marketing Agency

We've noticed that a number of law firms have a deep mistrust of marketers and agencies. Some have been burned before by agencies that weren't transparent with their methods or results. Others blame a lack of prospects on the agency, saying they wasted their money.

Like any relationship, the one with your marketing agency takes care and maintenance from both parties. It takes self-awareness and good old-fashioned open communication. It also takes some honesty from yourself about what you hope to achieve by hiring an agency.

The first conversation with your marketing agency should be about what's currently going on in your law firm in terms of marketing, competition, and prospects and how you'd like that to change through marketing efforts. It's up to you to be transparent about what you want out of the relationship, and up to the agency to decide if your goals are realistic and develop strategies to meet them.

A good marketing agency will be a long-term partner and feel like your marketing department that just happens to be in a different office. They will share your mission, create measurable goals and work hard to achieve them. And, most importantly, they will be honest when they aren't hitting the goals at the pace they expected and be ready with adjustments or new tactics.

WHAT IF THE AGENCY IS IMPOSSIBLE TO LOVE?

Of course, there are certainly agencies out there that have less-than-ideal methods. You see this a lot with agencies who offer simple packages of services. Law Firm Marketing—SEO (search engine optimization) in particular—is not a series of deliverables sold upfront with little investigation. It doesn't magically help obtain new clients when you do the exact same thing for 12 straight months.

Marketing and SEO require analyzing the current state of the law firm, looking at the competition, and creating a solution to maximize the law firm's visibility in their market. Then, as tactics are executed and measured, optimizing them along the way.

All marketing efforts need to be unique, they need to be tailored to the client. They need to be backed up with data. Every law firm is different! The practice areas, the attorneys, the location of the firm, the competition in the region, and more all need to be taken into consideration when working on a marketing strategy. But what if the agency is customizing their approach and being transparent, yet you're still disappointed in their performance?

IT TAKES TWO, BABY

You've heard it time and again—the key to a successful relationship is open and regular communication. This absolutely applies to your relationship with your law firm's marketing agency. If your marketing agency is not asking you about your current lead volume, your current marketing investment and strategy, your business goals, or generally doesn't seem invested in your success, it's very unlikely they can help you meet your law firm's goals.

On the flipside, if you don't communicate your goals and expectations to your agency in the beginning of your working relationship, how can you expect them to be successful for you?

If you are unwilling to have a transparent conversation about the marketing wins and mistakes you have made, the goals of the firm both short and long-term, then hiring a marketing agency may not be for you. If you simply see an agency pitching their "package" of a website, blog, and backlink building without stating why they're important or what the goals of the deliverables are, run.

If you're serious about growing your law firm's business, you have to invest time in your own success.

Mark Homer is the owner of gngf.com and is VBA Literati with a speciality of educating attorneys on all things marketing.

LEGAL WEEK 2019

FRIDAY TECH TIPS

Takeaways from Legalweek 2019

Andrea Cannavina

What's the No. 1 thing I cannot stand? Waste. In any form. You know, like the four hours you'll never get back watching this year's Super Bowl. That's how I felt about the time I invested in attending LTNY last year. But if "show me the beef" was my takeaway last year (my write-up for Attorney at Work is [here](#)), then "WOW! Everyone's at the all-you-can-eat buffet!" would be how I feel this year. From the packed expo hall floor to the quality of the people, I am still stunned by the 180-degree difference in the attendee experience from last year to this year.

[Click to read rest of Andrea's observations on the Attorney at Work website](#)

[Turn to page 7 for pictures from the floor of LWN19](#)

**SMARTER
TECHNOLOGY**
Experience
Counts



Don't use a free e-mail service for business. It is simple / inexpensive to register a domain to have a professional and private e-mail address – no website needed <-yet

Navigate to www.whois.com and search for available domains. Make sure to get one ending in ".com" YES, IT MUST BE THE DOT COM

Once registered, the domain admin will be able to set up to 2 e-mail addresses for that domain (at no additional charge). Make one generic – info or support @ and the other YOU @yourdomain.com

Loving The Things That Can Be Hard To Love

The theme in this month's newsletter is obviously love. I pondered how to create a coherent thesis around love in the legal field and technology. I even contemplated using a Venn diagram (I used to be a social studies teacher, LOVE Venn diagrams!) to show the intersection of common ground love between technology and law firms. But I realized after several years in the legal vendor space, there is often less common ground between technology and legal that can be defined as love. Many lawyers and many law firms just flat out don't love technology. Or better yet, they've chalked technology up as one of the things they love to hate.

This revelation made me wonder, what is it about technology that people fear or hate? To me, there is one overriding issue. People don't like change. Period. End of story. Mic drop. I've slowly realized over the years that I'm an odd duck. I love change and I love exploring all the nooks and crannies of new software to find a different/better/interesting way to do things.

Let me tell you a story. Before I worked in the legal tech field, I was with a large amateur sports complex that produced youth sports events (perfect training for getting into legal tech, right?). I was charged with overhauling our antiquated hand-written triplicate form Purchase Order system and rolling out a new online, intranet PO system. When meeting with each department to explain this new process and technology upgrade, I assumed I'd be showered with bouquets of thanks and hallelujahs for the time I was going to save them. You would have thought I was telling them I was going to steal their first born and send them off with the circus. If they'd had rotten tomatoes on hand, I would have been pelted.

You see, it turns out, they were in the "what's in it for me" mentality. They didn't see the benefit for them to adopt this new technology. Having to learn a new system and a new process was going to be too time-consuming and too hard and too everything. Even if

they had the concept that they would eventually save time, the road to get there was too overwhelming. Sound familiar for your law firm adopting new technology?

This is where I'm weird, like I said. If I have a task that takes me an hour to complete every time I do it, I'd rather take 59 minutes to figure out a process and a way to get that task done in one minute instead. Yes, it still took me an hour, but from here on out, it will only take one minute. But here's the thing. Even if it took me two, three, four hours to figure how to achieve that task in one minute, it's time well invested in the future.

I've spoken to dozens and dozens of lawyers who still hand write their time cards and use Excel spreadsheets to track time, then give them to an assistant who then correlates them into invoices each month. They know they're inefficient. They know there's a better way. But they're not willing to spend two, three, four hours learning how to do something that takes one minute once they figure out how to do it. They'd rather dance with the devil they know, even if they hate the process.

Lawyers have learned to love hating technology because they're afraid of change (like a lot of people) and because frankly, technology isn't perfect. I've cursed at software that's not working right or is laborious or doesn't make sense. Even software I love I sometimes get mad at it. I think it's too easy to find the faults, point the finger and say, "aha, see! I told you this is flawed!" Instead, let's embrace the change and the faults and the quirks because in the long run we can be more efficient and get more done. Remember the internet in 1997 compared to today? We need to embrace the beauty of change and all the imperfections that come with it to truly realize our best selves.

Scott Clasen is director of marketing for [TimeSolv](#), an online time and billing software provider for top law firms since 1999. TimeSolv is a 2019 Community Connection of the VBA

The top left corner of the slide features several overlapping geometric shapes in shades of beige and light brown, creating a modern, abstract design.

**LIFE ISN'T ABOUT WISHING
YOU WERE SOMEWHERE,
OR SOMEONE
THAT YOU'RE NOT.**

**LIFE IS ABOUT
ENJOYING WHERE YOU ARE,
LOVING WHO YOU ARE, AND
CONSISTENTLY IMPROVING BOTH.**

- HAL ELROD

Llamas of Legal - Marge

Name: Marge

Llama 004; Herd 1

Date of Adoption –January 2019

Adopted by: doeLegal

Handlers: Ashley and Scott

Personality traits: loves to be in the spotlight, Marge is hoping to work with the magician at doeLegal to help make the live booth appearances that much more exciting.

When she is not helping create the magic, Marge is busy studying up on all things doeLegal – reading everthing she can get her hooves on! Marge has also made a few friends, along with Scott Miller and Ashley, she loves her new bud the Panda (who pretends he knows how to read).



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Legalweek 2019



#LegalWeek19 #LWNY19 @LegalTypist
Schwag-A-Thon bag included:



Gotta Love Dano

My husband, Dan, is a great guy! By day, he is a skilled troubleshooter and technician working for a huge international copier corporation. By night, we've spent years restoring our 1920's Colonial home while raising two kids. He's also a car guy with a gorgeous 1969 Dodge Coronet in the garage and he's now on the hunt for a Grand National to make his own. In essence, he's a man's man who understands all things mechanical and electrical.

Recently, I was able to introduce Dan to a few of the peeps in my world: Brett Burney, Rochelle Washington, Natalie Kelly; Mark Homer and Brianna from gngf, Steve from FastCase, and Karl from SmartAdvocate confirmed what I have always known: Dan's just a lot of fun to hang out with and shoot the shit.

However, it was when Brett added a Dano tale to his presentation in GA, that I realized I wasn't the only one to spot that he's really quite ingenious in how he tackles problems.

In each installment of **Gotta Love Dano** I'm going to share with you how Dan does something. It may be something simple like a quick computer setting – or a life hack he's figured out.

For this first installment of **Gotta Love Dano** I'm going to pick a handyman item: Dano vacuums our garden. Yep. Vacuums.

Instead of raking, blowing or sweeping, he uses the shop vac and literally vacuums our 100' driveway and parts of the back yard.



From the petals that litter our property in the late Spring thanks to Mr. Wisteria, to the leaves that accumulate in the Fall, if our shop vac can suck it up – Dano will vacuum it!

At first I thought it was really odd – but after reflection... why not? He says why blow, then rake, then bag (almost always fighting the wind the whole time) ... when you can just suck it all up in the shop vac (which naturally mulches) and then empty the vac when it's full? No mess. No piles. No fighting the wind!

So next time you see the leaves, grass or other litter of Mother Nature in your yard, think of Dano and grab the shop vac instead of a rake.



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