

Are You Difficult to Deal With?

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Tips for Improving Your People Skills and Business Development



How often do you dominate conversations with clients?

How well do you know your colleagues and the types of law they practice in order to cross-market?

And, more importantly, how do you think others perceive you? Open-minded or opinionated?

Believe it or not, depending on your answers to these questions, your colleagues and clients may actually find you **DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH**.

Kick jargon and the ego aside, and think about how you can be more "**user-friendly**" to your colleagues and to people outside the legal field.

Here are some tips to help you **kick some negative habits** -and boost business!

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1. Listen. *Really* listen.

It's no secret that lawyers make their living primarily through their use of language. They are often successful through the creation of winning arguments. Unfortunately, though, these verbal skills can have a detrimental effect on client relationships. **Lawyers have a tendency to talk more and listen less!**

Break this habit by remembering to listen to your clients, your staff, and more importantly, friends and family. **Resist the temptation to take over a discussion!**

2. Open up around the office.

The best sources of business for any firm are current clients, but rarely does a lawyer from one area of practice know what his or her colleagues are doing at any given time. An internal newsletter, checklist, or intranet is a good way to track new clients or source information about the expertise of your colleagues. **It's hard to refer business to other lawyers in your firm if you don't know what kinds of cases they handle.**

3. Step outside your comfort zone.

While preventing and mitigating risk is an important client skill, there are times when looking at new opportunities and venturing out is a good idea. If someone wants to talk with you about a new job, buying a business, making an investment, or even starting a new career, there's no need to nix an idea until you've explored the pros and cons. **Be willing to step outside of your comfort zone. If you take some manageable risks, good things could happen.**

4. Spend time with people outside the legal field.

Lawyers speak a unique and specialized language. But the **average client or juror will not be impressed by your use of legal jargon.** If you find yourself socializing only with your peers, you will find it harder and harder to make a positive impression on whom we sometimes refer to as "civilians". Remember that civilians will probably be the people who hire you.

5. Understand that diversity is a fact of life.

A recent Sunday New York Times article asking why so few women were becoming partners in law firms was the newspaper's most e-mailed article in the 24 hour period following its publication. Obviously people are interested.

If we know that problems are best solved with a diversity of viewpoints and perspectives, it only makes sense to **have a diverse group of lawyers on board** to assist in the process. Firms that

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are successful in creating a truly diverse work force will have a competitive advantage in hiring new recruits and in winning certain clients.

Article adapted from [How to be More User-Friendly](#) by Wendy L. Werner.

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