

Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

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Lawyers: What Can We Learn From Zappos?



If you love shoes like I do, you're familiar with Zappos.com, the online shoe and clothing shop. Since it was founded in 1999, it has grown to be the largest online shoe store. How did they do it? Largely, in thanks to their CEO, [Tony Hsieh](#). According to their website:

In 1999, at the age of 24, Tony Hsieh (pronounced Shay) sold LinkExchange, the company he co-founded, to Microsoft for \$265 million.

He then joined us [Zappos] as an advisor and investor, and eventually became CEO, where he helped us grow from almost no sales to over \$1 billion in gross merchandise sales annually, while simultaneously making Fortune magazines annual Best Companies to Work For list. In November 2009, Zappos.com, Inc. was acquired by Amazon.com in a deal valued at \$1.2 billion on the day of closing.

Not too shabby, huh?

But how did they actually accomplish this incredible growth?

We've been asked by a lot of people how we've grown so quickly, and the answer is actually really simple... We've aligned the entire organization around one mission: to provide the best customer service possible. Internally, we call this our WOW philosophy.

If you've ever shopped at Zappos, you know this to be true. Let's look at an example. Last year, I purchased a pair of boots from them. Shipping was, incredibly, free! That alone could make a customer happy, but after ordering them, the boots arrived on my doorstep the very next morning.

Free, overnight shipping? Unheard of.

Even more amazing? If you're not 100% happy with your purchase, you have an entire year to return it. And they'll pay the shipping both ways.

Yes, seriously.

So what does this have to do with legal marketing?

Plenty.

Zappos' philosophy is about putting the customer first. Their core value #1 is "Deliver WOW Through Service," which they describe as:

WOW is such a short, simple word, but it really encompasses a lot of things. To WOW, you must differentiate yourself, which means doing something a little unconventional and innovative. You must do something that's above and beyond what's expected. And whatever you do must have an emotional impact on the receiver. We are not an average company, our service is not average, and we don't want our people to be average. We expect every employee to deliver WOW.

Whether internally with co-workers or externally with our customers and partners, delivering WOW results in word of mouth. Our philosophy at Zappos is to WOW with service and experience, not with anything that relates directly to monetary compensation (for example, we don't offer blanket discounts or promotions to customers).

We seek to WOW our customers, our co-workers, our vendors, our partners, and in the long run, our investors.

This isn't just something that Zappos says they'll do; they actually deliver. And as a result, the primary source of their rapid growth is repeat customers and word of mouth recommendations.

On their website, they have almost 8,500 customer recommendations - and that's just for Zappos itself, not their products. Do your clients love you that much?

What if you put them first, differentiated yourself and did "something that's above and beyond what's expected?" Would they come back to you for all of their legal work? Would they tell their colleagues, friends, family members, social media communities?

Absolutely.

In an industry where we're regularly hearing that the law firms that clients are interviewing are already all considered to be high quality, just by virtue of being considered, and that [clients hire lawyers not firms](#), it's essential to find a way to not only make your client happy with the results of your work, but help them to be ecstatic.

What can you do today to WOW your clients?

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