



Paula Black & Associates
3006 Aviation Avenue, Suite 3B <http://www.jdsupra.com/post/documentViewer.aspx?fid=1d2eba94-0a9c-4408-b5c2-3b6831fdd2d4>
Coconut Grove, Florida 33133
Phone 305-859-9554 • Fax 305-860-0016
paulablacklegalmarketing.com

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Contact Paula Black at:
3006 Aviation Avenue, Suite 3B
Coconut Grove, FL 33133
P 305-859-9554
F 305-860-0016
paulablacklegalmarketing.com

Paula Black has advised law firms around the globe on everything from powerful and innovative design to marketing strategy and business growth. She is an award-winning Amazon-bestselling author and the force behind **In Black & White** (inblackandwhiteblog.com), a blog dedicated to clear, straightforward advice and open discussion of legal marketing issues. For more information on Paula Black, her books and her company please visit paulablacklegalmarketing.com.

4 Ways to Make Your Clients More Loyal

In these precarious times, the most important aspect of your business may not be development, but retention. Though many think of business development as the quest for new clients, keeping the clients you have and (keeping them happy!) is one of the most important aspects of law firm marketing. The truth is that satisfied existing clients are your best source for new business. Up to 85% of next year's business will come from existing clients, so the question becomes... what kind of marketing tactics can you use today to ensure your clients are standing beside you tomorrow? Here are a few of our top strategies for ensuring and building on client loyalties...

1. Give them something for nothing.

As I tell my clients all the time: "Free is not a four letter word." In fact, it's one of the smartest things you can do as far as building on client loyalty. That's not to say we should abandon billing altogether, but getting a bill for a 5-minute phone call can sometimes wear down even the wealthiest clients. The next time something small comes up (a question, advice, lunch...) think hard about whether you really need to bill. You might be surprised.

2. Always, always follow through.

One of the best ways to keep clients coming back over the years is to make them feel special. Never end a case or matter with a client without making sure all their needs and questions have been satisfied. Additionally, be up front about costs and timing. If there are going to be changes to either of those let them know as soon as possible. And ideally (ideally!) try to return all phone calls and emails within the same day.

3. Get in front of them.

That means be more to them than just another e-mail address. I know it's hard to find the time, but nothing can replace face-to-face interaction. Supplement your relationship and keep your name in front of them with firm newsletters, hand-written notes and even firm-sponsored seminars. You know the old saying "out of sight, out of mind."

4. Ask questions.

I can't stress this one enough. If you're wondering how your firm is servicing clients and what else you can be doing to keep them happy... why not go straight to the source? Clients will appreciate your concern, and you get a chance to hear firsthand about their business and personal goals—and what you can do to help facilitate them. Listen to what they have to say. Or as I tell my clients: Listen, Learn, and say Thank You.

It may all sound like Generating Business 101, but we all need a wake-up call sometimes. There's more to practicing law than just quality legal work. You need to provide quality service as well.