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Preventing "Lawyer Meltdown" and Creating Productive, Profitable and Enjoyable Law Practices



Become a Client-Centric Law Firm

By Allison C. Shields, Esq.

I once had the opportunity to hear [David Maister](#), noted management consultant and expert on professional services firms, speak on the idea of being a **client-centric** firm.

If you look at almost any law firm website, chances are you'll see claims like this:

"The Wilson Law Firm has a history of providing exceptional services to clients in the areas of ..."

or

"The dedicated professionals at Smith Law Firm deliver the highest quality client service..."

or

"The hallmark of Jones & Jones, LLP is our dedication to meeting the legal needs of our clients..."

In short, everyone says it, but how many law firms (or individual lawyers) actually deliver?

If you ask most lawyers, they'll probably tell you that they serve clients well and that client service is their "#1 priority." After all, without clients, there's no law firm. But ask yourself (and be brutally honest) whether your firm and all of its operations are actually structured with the client in mind. Is client service **really** your top priority? ***Would your clients agree?***

Here's a test, adapted from David Maister's materials, to determine whether your firm is actually client-centric. Rate your firm on how well you accomplish the following:

- You are better at listening to your clients and finding out how they want to be dealt with than other lawyers in your area who do the same work you do
- You have a continuous system of monitoring the quality of the client's experience (from the client's perspective)
- The client experience responses received are an important criteria in evaluation of your success as a firm, and the success (including advancement and compensation) of the lawyers and staff at the firm
- You provide ongoing training to *everyone* in your firm (or even outside of your firm, but who do work on behalf of the firm) who has contact with clients to improve their client relationship skills
- You use the information gained about the client's experience with you and your firm to continually improve your services and the way those services are provided to clients
- You invest time in learning about your clients and their business on an ongoing basis
- You treat each client as unique, taking the time to learn about their individual situation and circumstance and to adapt or customize your services based upon the client's needs, rather than simply providing a 'canned' solution or response to the client's issues
- You place more emphasis on building on existing client relationships than on obtaining new clients or accounts

Are you paying lip service to 'excellent client service,' or, as David Maister would say, is it actually *a matter of principle* for your firm?

About the Author

Allison C. Shields, Esq., President of Legal Ease Consulting, Inc., is a former practicing attorney and law firm manager who helps law firms create more productive, profitable and enjoyable law practices by providing practice management and business development coaching and consulting. Contact her at Allison@LegalEaseConsulting.com, visit her website at www.LawyerMeltdown.com or her blog, www.LegalEaseConsulting.com.

