

Relationship Building: Staying in Touch

By Kimberly Alford Rice

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Some things appear to be so simple that we assume (dangerously) that everyone “gets it.” Bear with me a moment.

For lawyers, it is imperative to consistently and persistently cultivate, nurture and strengthen their relationships with their universal network - with clients, to receive more work; with referral sources, to receive more referrals; with prospects to develop new work, and so on. Then, answer me, why is it that a significant number of lawyers (clients and wannabes) either have no system (formal or otherwise) for getting and staying in touch with these people and/or do a dismal job of staying connected?

What Does “Getting and Staying in Touch” Mean?

Again, a seemingly obvious question, but in my legal marketing practice of over 20 years, I have yet to encounter more than a handful of lawyers who understand, as a practical matter, the fundamental principle of this phrase.

Starting with the widely-known statistic that it takes from seven to ten “touches” annually to stay “top-of-mind,” lawyers are well-served to develop (often with the support of their legal secretary/assistant/marketing or IT department) a consolidated contact list including:

- Clients
- Industry/professional contacts
- Referral sources
- Prospects
- Friends and family
- School classmates (law school, college, high school, etc.)
- Co-workers and former co-workers
- Contacts from former clerkships
- Association contacts

- Community contacts
- Holiday card recipients

Though it may be an arduous administrative task to assemble all the business cards, old rolodexes (yes, I'm showing my age), database printouts, etc., it is important to have all your contacts in one system.

As I often relay to my clients, having no list equals having no connections or communications with friends, peers, industry contacts, prospects and, ultimately, no clients. Remember, we're in the "relationship-building" business and it becomes much more daunting to foster relationships if we don't proactively get and stay in touch.