



## Six ways to earn your clients' love

By E. Leigh Dance | Autumn 2019

Today's uncertainty reminds us to go back to the basics - but with a current twist. E. Leigh Dance leads legal services consultancy ELD International LLC, with bases in New York and Brussels. Here she explains why refocusing on things that can really make a difference can be the way to reignite the client relationship.

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With tensions apparent across many business, political and social issues these days, it's a good moment to circle back to the groundrules of good client communications. Be helpful, spring no surprises, connect your clients to the right experts— all of these are important. But you can really achieve an impact when you apply the following tips. Here are my six suggestions for keeping the hard-earned love of clients at times like *now*.

### Give advice that is helpful

With storms swirling around trade, Brexit and global recession, your partners and colleagues can't always give sure answers or absolute advice on the right step forward. But your clients still seek intelligent ways to tell their bosses and Boards that "*they just don't have an answer*". Your best approach is to be helpful: give a concise review of what we know now, key points where there is no clarity, and timelines on when clarity may come. Arm your service providers with a few options and examples of what your other respected clients are doing, particularly in their sector— it will really help, since decisions need to be made no matter the weather.

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### No Surprises

In uncertainty, work environments are often more stressful - and fuses may be short. Surprises are more aggravating than ever in this climate. It's best to be open about scope, fees and deliverables now, to avoid causing unpleasant surprises later. 'No surprises' also means your clients will appreciate your guidance on avoiding the unknown. Send relevant alerts about what's on the horizon that could impact their business in the near future. Make the alerts focused and specific to the services you provide and share a calendar whenever possible.



***Tactical tips are more useful than general advice, since your customers' [or clients'] time is tight, clarity is lacking, and focus is on short-term performance.***

### Give them tips, not just diagnostics

It's frustrating when the daily news doesn't tell us what's going to happen next. The result is that most businesses have their focus trained to the near-term these days. Tactical tips may be more useful to them than strategic advice. They won't appreciate your professional's self-interested sales pitch that raises fears of an imminent risk (unless it's real, of course, in which case you should ring them up). The best action is to always include with your informational communications some clear steps on what to do next, e.g. *here's what we're seeing, here's what you may want to do.*

### Get your clients together with their peers

Our current climate raises the appetite for views of our peers in other respected companies. Executive-level clients appreciate small (five to six people) and simple events for breakfast, lunch, a drink or dinner. They benefit from reassurance they're not alone, and to get cred for sharing 'prevailing views' when back at the office. As host, you can make introductions and moderate the conversation (of course, steer clear of legal landmines like pricing or inside info. Follow PSMG leader Gail Jaffa's warm and gracious diplomacy – you can't go wrong!

### Bring new perspectives and guest expertise to your clients

Change up your seminars, events and newsletters so that it's not just your accountants or lawyers doing the talking. Fear of downside risk is heightened during uncertainty. Clients are eager to get a few diverse professional perspectives, including in different industries and roles. Lead with panels that provide insights from clients and other relevant experts

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(hopefully those that refer work to your firm as well), and have your professionals do the moderating and introductions.

### Organise something fun!

One or two steps below leadership level, client teams (and your own professionals) really appreciate the chance to leave their work intensity for positive distraction. You can build relationships and win the goodwill of many influential clients by providing more social interaction among rising professionals. Let your millennials choose simple themes for these gatherings, whether a group visit to a new museum exhibit opening or a walking tour with a twist in an up-and-coming urban neighborhood. The goal is to host simple and original activities that bring professionals together to talk and have fun. If your first event is a success, invite me to the second one!

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*Link to the original published article: <https://dh-design.foleon.com/e-doc/centrum-autumn-19#!/learning-leigh-dance>*