

Millennial Clients Are Forcing Attorneys to Rethink Their Marketing Approach

By Frank Ready / October 31, 2019 Law.com

Law firms are leveraging technology to drive a new approach to marketing that emphasizes humanity over bare-bones credentials, an effort that seems almost tailor-made to capture the attention of would-be millennial clients. But are law firms really eager to target a millennial clientele?

The answer might be both yes and no. Roy Sexton, director of marketing at Clark Hill, pointed out that millennials are changing the way that the generations that came before and after them are engaging with their phones, social media and other technologies. In other words, reaching millennials could be parlayed into accessing the broader client market at large. For example, Sexton indicated that Clark Hill would be redoing its website over the coming year in addition to revamping its brand. “We need to put all of that in language that appeals, yes to millennials, but again, to millennials on the way toward appealing toward everyone else. And the manner in which millennials are reshaping our culture and the way we think, we have to keep an eye towards that,” Sexton said.

And it’s not just the business of the individual millennial client that firms need to be thinking about courting. Jill Huse, president-elect of the Legal Marketing Association, noted that millennials are also advancing to positions of corporate power inside corporate America. “I think that a lot of law firms are exploring different ways to really attract these millennials,” Huse said.

In large part, that means using social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to inject more personality into the way that attorneys and firms have traditionally marketed themselves.

Sexton framed the change as going a step beyond establishing that an attorney is good at their job. Millennials—and by extent a law firm’s potential audience as a whole—are looking to ascertain more about the type of person handling their legal business. “They assume that you’re a good lawyer. They want to see that you’re a decent human being and that you’re engaged in our world,” Sexton said. For example, Sexton might reshare posts or photos from a Clark Hill attorney who devotes their free time to cancer advocacy work across the firm’s channels.

That kind of personalized approach to client engagement is echoed in a new feature from NextChapter, a company that has traditionally focused upon cloud-based solutions for preparing bankruptcy forms .

NextChapter’s new Modern Attorney Directory encourages its attorney clients to create profiles that share their social media handles, fun facts about themselves and whether or not they embrace alternative forms of payment like Venmo or Apple Pay. Janine Sickmeyer, NextChapter’s founder, said the directory was built to help people find attorneys who “work the way that they live,” whether it’s a willingness to meet via video chat or a shared hobby.

She thinks the feature will appeal particularly to millennials, who are accustomed to seeking out the people they work with on social media. “I think that there are just a lot of different ways that millennials are looking for really professionals of all kinds. You see this with doctors and therapists,” Sickmeyer said.

Still, courting millennial clients is not all about the personal touch, and some of the other technologies at play may require more of an upfront investment of time and resources than opening a Instagram account.

Huse noted that podcasts in particular tend to attract a heavy millennial audience, but she has not seen many firms venture too far down that road yet, possibly because of the amount of attention that is required to successfully execute such a project.

But other efforts require less ongoing maintenance to sustain. Huse pointed to firms that have incorporated live chat features to their sites or the ability for clients to upload photos and documents.

One thing that still hasn’t caught on inside law firms is Venmo or Apple Pay—yet. “I think it will,” Huse said. “I haven’t actually seen that trend emerging, but I could certainly see where that would have a lot of credence moving forward.”