

The Focus Challenge – Part 2: Your Clients

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By Gerry Riskin



1. The Legal Matter

Here are some of the essential lessons I have learned after several decades of listening closely to clients, conducting my own research, and reading a myriad of surveys and research studies by others:

- a) Clients do not have legal problems. They have personal or business problems that may require them to seek the services of their lawyer.
- b) Clients do not want to be treated as though they were stupid, nor do they want to relinquish control. Clients want choices, not answers; specifically, they want choices that they would not be able to generate without the expertise and assistance of their lawyers – ones that will help them to level the playing field in finding a resolution to their problem.
- c) Lawyers often believe that the only thing clients care about is results, but research shows that this belief is wrong. Clients want a lawyer who cares and exerts effort... and since most of the expended effort is invisible, lawyers must project that effort so that the client is aware of what is being done on their behalf.

2. The Business Affected

All clients want a lawyer who understands their situation; in the case of business clients, this means understanding the industry and the client's place in it.

Understanding the industry and the business are essential to resolving related legal problems in an optimal way.

Many lawyers are unconsciously incompetent in this regard. They believe that their knowledge of the typical legal requirements of a specific business or industry reflects an understanding of that business or industry. For example, they think that knowing how to manage the legal requirements of aircraft leasing makes them an airline industry expert when, in fact, understanding terrorism, fuel prices, political stability, etc. are key to the executive suite of the airline.

3. The Satisfaction

Clients are satisfied with lawyers who listened to them.

Clients are satisfied when their expectations have been managed and shaped in such a way that they are capable of appreciating what the lawyer has helped them to achieve. When lawyers fail to shape the expectations of their clients (and most lawyers fall into this category), they set up a losing game in which they are never able to measure up to what the uninformed client naively imagines is possible.

Footnote: People judge everything they encounter in their lives on the basis of experience, and your clients are no different. We must not lose ourselves in the substantive elements of the practice of law such that we forget for even a moment to care about what our client is experiencing in the moment. Many organizations now recognize that this issue is so important that they have created a position called “chief experience officer,” or CXO, who is responsible for making every piece and part of the encounter between the consumer in the organization a positive, meaningful and hopefully memorable experience.

I'd be happy to discuss any of the component pieces of this article in greater depth as a courtesy to my readers. Contact me at edge.ai or at my blog, gerryriskin.com.

In the first article in this series, I discussed:

[THE FOCUS CHALLENGE – PART 1: YOUR PRACTICE](#)

The third and final article will be:

THE FOCUS CHALLENGE – PART 3: YOUR FAMILY

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