Foreword

Good clients are at the heart of any successful professional practice. Everyone knows this, but very few professionals take the time and exert the effort to understand who their best clients are, what they really value, how to build deeper relationships with them, and how to replicate those relationships with other clients.

Marketing studies have consistently demonstrated that it takes approximately seven to eight times as much money—and seven to twelve additional meaningful encounters—to acquire a new client as to secure a new piece of business from a client who has worked with you already. In spite of this, law firms often fail to mine their client bases for these “low-hanging fruit” opportunities.

This book is conceived as a how-to guide that will help you tend what is already most rewarding, both intellectually and financially, in your practice: the clients who value you most and with whom you most value working. The steps outlined here are straightforward, strategic, and significantly important for your practice’s long-term health and viability.

This book is structured around five core principles derived from the authors’ cumulative four decades of experience in helping professionals, especially attorneys, market their practices:

1. Value is defined by the client. In order to be perceived as worth your fee, you must understand what your clients value and deliver it consistently.

2. Communication is central to the delivery of professional services. Attorneys are so accustomed to using their expertise to solve problems for their clients that they may neglect key elements of communication.

3. Creating a loyal client is a process, not a given. No matter how effective your work for a client, without taking certain steps to build loyalty, you likely have, at best, a satisfied client who may or may not be inclined to work with you again.

4. Knowing more about your clients and about your own work preferences will help you build a more enduring practice. Every professional does some things better—and more happily—than
other things. Systematically identifying those things and mapping them to your best clients will have a salutary impact on your bottom line.

5. It is possible to replicate your best client relationships. Once you understand the key characteristics of your best clients, it is easier to seek out and build similar relationships, increasing your professional satisfaction, your overall compensation and your competitive standing in the marketplace.

The authors have endeavored to omit the jargon for which their profession is so frequently—and justly—ridiculed. Where it was necessarily used, a concise explanation has been offered. Like all bodies of knowledge, this one was influenced by, builds upon, and departs from the work of other experts; you will find references to useful works in the footnotes and bibliography.

You may be skeptical about these promises; you probably would not be a good attorney if you are not. Consider this: as competition grows fiercer and as an increasing number of law firms organize more formally along corporate lines and follow corporate business practices, the likelihood of falling behind—or of being forced out of business altogether—will increase significantly.

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