

REPLACING
- THE -
RAINMAKER

WORKSHOPS

CLIENT SERVICE PROCESS

This workbook accompanies the audio workshop. It includes speaker's notes, which summarize the content covered in the workshop. It also includes activities, which you'll complete during the workshop, and a continuing education assignment, which you'll complete after the workshop. The continuing education assignment gives you a chance to apply the theory you learned in a practical setting. At the end, there's a quiz to test what you've learned as well as space to make notes and information on where to go to learn more.

SPEAKER'S NOTES

Learning outcomes

- You'll learn about the benefits of outstanding client service.
- You'll learn how to conduct client service meetings.
- You'll learn how these client service meetings serve as a demonstration of your overarching commitment to client service.

Client service process

- First you have to decide on your firm's client service values.
- Once you know your values, you have to live them.
- Your values have to permeate everything you do.

Meet with your clients

- The client service process involves a one-hour meeting with a client.
- The first hour of this meeting should be devoted to interviewing the client.
- The second hour of this meeting should be devoted to demonstrating your value.

Stand out from the crowd

- Outstanding client service is a common claim.
- Clients want outstanding client service.
- At most firms, "outstanding" client service looks almost identical.

Out of the ordinary

- To deliver outstanding client service, you have to offer service that is out of the ordinary or uncommon.
- You have to instill a commitment to your client service values throughout your entire firm.
- The client service process helps ensure that everyone is living by your values.

Offer proof

- Outstanding client service sets you apart from your competitors.
- Outstanding client service helps you establish your value.
- Client service meetings offer proof of your commitment to client service.

Keep your clients happy

- The client service process helps you retain your existing clients.
- Clients want accountants who invest the time to understand their needs.
- Client service meetings help you learn more about your client, their family, their job and their goals.

Showcase your value

- The client service process gives you a great opportunity to showcase your value.
- You're demonstrating that you're committed to continuous improvement.
- You're demonstrating that you possess technical and industry knowledge.

Meet new clients

- Delivering excellent service leads to more referrals to new clients.
- Your existing clients should be one of your biggest sources of new business.
- To ask for referrals from your existing clients, you first have to deliver excellent work.

Deepen your bond

- Outstanding client service helps you deepen your relationships with clients.
- Outstanding client service helps you get to know your clients better.
- The more you know about your clients, the better you can serve them.

It's the little things

- Why isn't outstanding client service more common?
- Accountants are busy people and something has to give.
- It's the little things that make the difference between satisfactory and outstanding client service.

Don't let money stand in the way

- Client service meetings should not be billed to clients.
- You stand to uncover a lot of opportunity by learning more about your clients.
- You don't want one hour of revenue to get in the way of those opportunities.

Prioritize

- Use an "A", "B" and "C" rating system to classify your clients.
- Conduct client service meetings in person with all your "A" clients.
- Conduct client service meetings with "B" clients either in person or over the phone.

Interview the client

- The first step in the client service meeting is to interview the client.
- The goal is to come away with a better understanding the client's needs, wants, issues and unknowns.
- Ask questions to uncover their priorities and to understand what role you can play.

Take care of everything

- Clients want accountants who can take care of all their needs.
- Be on the lookout for more ways to serve them.
- Be on the lookout for opportunities to refer them to a colleague or strategic alliance partner.

You won't know if you don't ask

- Ask what's coming up in your client's professional and personal life.
- You won't know if you don't ask.
- Clients don't always volunteer the relevant information.

Become a trusted advisor

- Finding more ways to serve your client establishes you as a trusted advisor.
- Most clients have one advisor they rely on the most.
- You want to be that person.

The Three E's

- The "Three E's of Questioning" are entry, elaborate and evaluate.
- Entry questions are broad, open-ended questions that get the client talking.
- Elaborative questions are designed to get the client to expand on specific topics of interest.

The Three E's

- Evaluative questions aim to establish how important or urgent the topic is.
- You want to focus on addressing the most important issues.
- Often evaluative questions rely on words such as "impact" or "consequence."

Judgment day

- Ask questions about your own performance.
- These questions help you evaluate what works, what doesn't and how you can improve.
- These questions indicate to your client that you're committed to doing better.

Interview the client

- Move on to more business development-specific questions.
- Often clients don't know the full extent of the services you provide.
- Get in the habit of educating your clients about what you do and for whom you do it.

Share something of value

- Share something of value with the client.
- You could offer advice to help the client generate revenue, eliminate expenses or save time.
- You could draw on new legislation, a study or report to demonstrate that you keep up to date in your field.

Good news opportunity

- Sharing something of value presents you with a "good news opportunity."
- A "good news opportunity" offers a chance to convert positive feelings into business development opportunity.
- A "good news opportunity" is the perfect time to ask clients for new work.

Ask for referrals

- Asking for referrals is the Achilles heel of most accountants.
- They assume that if they do good work, referrals will follow.
- Your method of asking for referrals will depend on your client's personality.

Introvert or extrovert

- Start out with "I'm always looking for great clients like you."
- With introverts, tell them you would appreciate it if they would pass your name along.
- With extroverts, ask, "Do you know anyone else who could benefit from my services?"

Introvert or extrovert

- With introverted clients, you avoid putting the client on the spot.
- With extroverted clients, you ask directly whether they can think of anyone and wait for an answer.
- You have to judge what approach works best for each client.

Close with commitments

- End up summarizing your commitments.
- State exactly what you're going to do and when you're going to do it by.
- Review calendars and schedule any follow-up calls or meetings before you leave.

Summarize and execute commitments

- Summarize commitments via email after the meeting.
- Complete the action items you listed in your commitments email.
- All your client service efforts will crumble if you don't do what you said you were going to do.

Follow up on referrals

- Reconnect with your client over the phone after a suitable period of time.
- If they didn't offer names of referral sources initially, remind them of your interest.
- If they offered names initially, update them on any progress you've made.

Time and again

- This process is merely a demonstration of your firm's outstanding client service commitment.
- The overarching commitment has to involve more than a one-hour annual get-together.
- It has to be substantiated with more illustrations of your ongoing commitment to provide outstanding service.

Summary

- Having a clearly defined client service process helps you communicate your client service values.
- The client service process also helps you uncover new ways to better serve your client.
- You can leverage the client service process into a networking opportunity to meet other ideal clients.

ACTIVITIES

If you're completing these activities on your own, please write down your answers in your workbook. If you're completing these activities in a group, please write down your answers individually. Then share your responses with up to two other people. Look for commonalities among everyone's responses and discuss any differences.

Activity 1

What are the benefits of offering outstanding client service? Conversely, what are the liabilities associated with providing sub-standard service?

Activity 2

Provide examples of how you could "share something of value" with a client. For each example, explain the benefit to the client. How might they use this information to seize an opportunity or minimize a liability?

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Participate in or lead a client service meeting with an "A" client. Conduct a post-meeting review to identify positives, concerns and areas for improvement.

QUIZ

1. If you want to deliver outstanding client service, you need to be able to demonstrate that you offer service that is out of the ordinary or uncommon.
2. If you can make a persuasive claim about how you offer outstanding client service then you're delivering something that your competitors aren't.
3. Providing outstanding client service rarely leads to an increase in referrals from existing clients.
4. You should take a one-size-fits-all approach with your client service process. What you do for your "C" clients should exactly mirror what you do for you "A" clients.
5. The "Three E's of Questioning" are entry, elaborate and estimate.
6. You should always ask for referrals at the end of a productive client service meeting.
7. The process for asking an introvert for a referral is the same as asking an extrovert.
8. You should always end a meeting by summarizing any actions you've committed to over the course of the meeting.
9. Immediately after the meeting, you should always send an email summarizing agreed-to action items.
10. Recognizing special dates and achievements, supporting ongoing client education initiatives and rewarding clients for referring new business opportunities are all examples of how you can substantiate your client service commitment beyond a one-hour annual get-together.

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about additional workshops, or other Replacing the Rainmaker products and services, please visit ReplacingTheRainmaker.com.