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## **Following Up After the Lunch**

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Lunch meetings are often an effective marketing technique for beginning business relationships. Unfortunately, the value of many successful luncheons is lost due to lack of follow-up.

Many lawyers are reluctant, or completely forget to follow up with their prospects after lunch. If they follow-up at all, it is often limited to sending a brochure, or writing a letter, or sending an e-mail. And, they rationalize their failure to do additional follow-up with statements like, "We've had lunch. They know what I do. If they need me they'll call me!"

However, there is more to marketing than a single meal. Lunch is usually only one step in a long-term process.

It may take many years from the time that you meet someone for lunch, to the time that they have a need for your services. And, in that time, your lunch guest may forget about you altogether. People become absorbed in their own day-to-day problems. Also, your competition may be effectively reaching out to your prospects. If you want to insure that your prospects are thinking of you when the need arises, you must not only follow-up after lunch, but you should be prepared to stay in touch for many years.

The most obvious follow-up technique after a lunch is additional lunches. But, you may feel awkward continuously inviting some people to lunch. If this is the case, you can still follow up with people in ways that are appropriate, practical and effective.

The process of following up after lunch begins during lunch. It requires listening for the needs and interests of your prospects, so that later you have valid reasons for staying in touch. We have divided follow-up techniques into five main categories.

### **Education**

The first main category of follow-up is education. You are already probably using this technique to a certain degree. Giving advice is one form of education which lawyers provide all of the time. However, if you were to offer to do some additional research on an issue, or promise to send your contact some relevant information, you would have a good reason for following up.

In addition to following up immediately after lunch, you could continue to stay in touch over many years by mailing newsletters, legal updates or reprints of published articles. You could offer to do on-site seminars or invite people to activities in which you are taking an active role.

Education is such a far superior technique for following up with someone than sending a brochure. Whereas brochures only brag about the

benefits of your practice, education can help your contacts in many ways. The information you provide could help them save time and money, and even enrich their lives. And, if you get published, or are asked to speak for an organization, you gain third party endorsement, which provides much greater authority than a brochure.

### **Introductions**

Providing introductions is another effective follow-up technique. In your conversations with prospects, try to determine the types of people they would benefit from meeting. As a general rule, when you make introductions you create “*Referrals Receivable*.” In other words, when people receive introductions, they are often motivated to reciprocate.

Every lawyer is familiar with the concept of quid pro quo: “You’ll refer a client to me if I refer one to you.” But, clients are not the only form of introductions that offer value. You may have contacts in complementary industries who could help each other. Bankers want to meet CPAs. Real estate professionals want to meet insurance agents.

We have a client who had lunch with a prospect, and learned that his prospect’s daughter was trying to get into a certain college. As luck would have it, our client had a good friend in a position of authority at that college. After returning to his office our client made a phone call and as a favor was able to set up a personal interview with the dean of the school. His prospect was delighted and ultimately reciprocated by sending work to our client. Introductions can be such an effective follow-up technique that some lawyers we know use introductions as their exclusive marketing technique.

When you introduce people to each other, make sure they actually meet. In our business, when we introduce our contacts to each other, we not only *suggest* that they call each other, we physically

*bring* them together by inviting them to breakfasts, lunches, seminars and networking events.

### **Interests**

You may discover that you and your contacts share a passion for sports, wine, travel, or other interests. Pursuing mutual interests can be fun, and emotionally bonding. And, there is a well known marketing principle that states: “People do business with the people they like.”

Of course, we don’t recommend pursuing interests with people you don’t like, simply to get their business. But, as long as you enjoy each other’s company, there is absolutely nothing wrong with blending business with pleasure. In fact, it is very common for business relationships to evolve into long-lasting friendships directly as a result of spending time together while pursuing mutual interests.

### **Entertainment**

Another follow-up category is entertainment. People love to be entertained. Dinners at nice restaurants, backyard barbecues, concerts, all provide entertainment value. And, for those who enjoy them, we recommend throwing parties. Parties are a wonderful way of offering value to many people at one time, and for less money than it would cost if you were to entertain them individually. Parties are also excellent environments for introducing your friends and business contacts to each other.

### **Organizations**

Helping people with the organizations they support is another technique for following up. Your lunch contacts may be involved with various organizations such as trade groups, charities or business networking groups. And, if you decide to get involved, organizations are can be excellent environments for staying in touch with your contacts for many years.

The above examples of follow-up are a fraction of the techniques available. So, don't leave your marketing up to chance by hoping that your lunch contacts will remember to call you. Rather, use the lunch as an opportunity for identifying ways of taking the next step with your prospects. Luncheons may open the door to potential business relationships, but it is follow-through that closes the deal.