

The Holidays Are Coming - Sooner Than You Think!

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It is not too soon to be thinking about the Winter Holidays - especially if your firm manages by committee! To ease the burden of planning events, sending cards and giving gifts, here are some tips to consider:

Start now

There are lots of decisions that need to be made and tasks that need to be accomplished. You'll need enough time to select and order the cards or gifts; have the lawyers submit their lists; and clean up the firm's mailing list. You can even have the lawyers sign their cards long before they are mailed. This will dramatically reduce the last-minute rush and the frustration of having too many cards to sign at one sitting.

If you send a holiday card, send one that gets noticed

Many lawyers have decided not to send holiday cards. They believe that the true meaning of the holiday is obscured by the obvious commercial component of greeting cards. We have also heard lawyers say that the marketing value is minimal compared to other outreach techniques. But, if you decide to go with the mainstream and send a card, there is no question that a personal note makes a big difference. Consider enclosing a photo. The more personalized the sentiment, the more likely the card will be valued and remembered.

Another way to get noticed is to create a custom card. Write a message that says more than some syrupy generic message of good will. Be sure your message does not offend members of varying religions. Many firms announce that they have made a donation to their favorite charities in the name of their clients. Hire a designer to create a graphic design that is different than the off-the-shelf products. Think of this as an opportunity to communicate your creativity.

You may also want to consider sending your cards early. Cards that arrive early are more likely to be noticed. You might want to send them as early as Thanksgiving - which seems like a more appropriate time to thank your clients for their business.

Send cards to vendors

In your desire to focus on client relationships, it is easy to forget about vendors. However, vendors really appreciate it when they get cards from clients, and it helps to ensure continued good service.

Thank clients who send cards to you

Make sure that the lawyers in your firm thank the clients who send them cards. Receiving a card from a client provides a perfect reason to call and increase the personal bond.

Select gifts with enduring value

If you are planning on giving gifts, we suggest you avoid food baskets or liquor. While these gifts may be appreciated, they don't last. (Notwithstanding those large popcorn tins which have been known to last for years.) Also, considering today's health-consciousness, you don't want to send carbs to dieters. Rather, give something useful that will have lasting value - something that they will continue to appreciate throughout the year. But, whatever you give, don't put your logo on the gift! An otherwise appropriate gift will seldom stay on your client's desk if it carries your logo. If you're planning on sending a more expensive gift, we recommend recognizable, prestige brands.

Instead of sending a gift, you may consider making a contribution to the favorite charity of your client. Most charities have the ability to send a card to your client notifying them of your good deed but will not mention the amount of the contribution. While a contribution is not a durable gift, it is so meaningful it does have a lasting quality.

Maximize the pleasure of events

If you're planning a holiday party for clients, you should include a map to your office with clear instructions about parking. Make sure your lawyers are instructed in how to welcome and engage the guests. Make sure people are greeted at the door and introduced to other guests and attorneys. Be sure to validate parking ***when they enter***. And, don't let all the young associates bunch together in their own cliques!

The Holidays bring a tremendous amount of additional work and pressure. Hopefully, if you get a jump on this year's holiday efforts, you can pray for peace on earth and, at the same time, actually experience it in the office. Happy Holidays in advance!

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