

## From Cards to Coffee: Showing Client Appreciation

Your clients are the lifeblood of your business. How do you show your appreciation for their business? In her Best Practices for Solo Practices column, Janet Falk explores how several solo attorneys thanked their clients in the year that just ended.

By **Janet Falk** January 09, 2020

Clients! You can't live with 'em and you can't live without 'em. Your clients are the lifeblood of your business. How do you show your appreciation for their business? Here's how several solo attorneys thanked their clients in the year that just ended.

During the holiday season, many solo attorneys mail greeting cards, anywhere from 10 to 200. Jamel Oeser-Sweat, who practices criminal defense at [Oeser-Sweat](#), adds a personal note to his cards and flexes his creative muscle. "I also include a criminal complaint against Santa, a funny joke that serves as a reminder of the work we do in our criminal practice."

Eric Sarver, with a practice of employment and business law for companies at [Law Offices of Eric Sarver](#), says, "I believe in going low-tech: sending paper cards through the mail, as opposed to e-cards or online newsletter greetings. I believe that people remember cards that they can open, read, hang-up and hold on to. And there is no risk of a mailed, paper holiday card ending up in someone's spam folder."

Patent and trademark attorney Timur Slonim of [Slonim Legal](#) agrees: "I know that a lot of professionals display holiday cards in their offices for some time. I love nothing more than to walk into my client's office and see my card on display. That's why I spend time to find a unique card."

Just as printed cards are arrayed on a credenza or taped to a door, e-cards are easily forwarded to others. Barry Heyman, with an entertainment, music, new media and IP practice at [Heyman Law](#), takes the electronic greeting approach, consistent with the preference of his contacts. "I typically use social media and email to send holiday

greetings, which is probably received or viewed by 2,000+ clients—past, current and prospective—and friends of the firm.”

As part of your annual marketing budget, the expense of cards and client gifts may range between \$100 to \$800, or more. Zara Watkins, who writes briefs for appeals and substantive motions in state, federal and immigration cases at [On Point Expertise](#), mails a creative gift and holiday card to 30 clients. This year, “I am sending crafted page flags, which are page markers decorated with original art,” similar to post-it sticky notes. [Andrew Berks](#), with an intellectual property, patents and litigation practice, adds “I send a box of chocolates to a handful of clients who give me significant business during the year. In 2019, I sent five boxes.”

Other solo attorneys give away promotional items, not only during the holidays, but at any time of the year. Charles-Eric Gordon, investigative counsel at [Law Office of Charles-Eric Gordon](#), says “I hand out and mail pocket diaries with my name, telephone number and email address, as well as my principal area of concentration: locating missing people.” Oeser-Sweat has an array of promotional items: Stylus pens, mugs, jackets, hats and hoodies, all appropriate in any season.

A contribution to a favorite nonprofit organization on behalf of clients is another option. Biana Borukhovich, with a practice in IP and fashion law at [Law Office of Biana Borukhovich](#), donates to a nonprofit that aligns with her heritage, [Russian American Jewish Experience](#).

Oeser-Sweat finds a charitable donation may even be reciprocated “I am the President of the Board of Directors of [SCAN-HARBOR](#). Sometimes my clients donate to the organization ... and also contribute to our holiday toy drive.”

Client appreciation may occasionally take the less tangible, and perhaps more enjoyable, form of a coffee chat or lunch. Slonim notes the importance of face-to-face interaction with those he normally communicates with by phone and email. “As the majority of my clients are not based in New York, I like to take clients out for a meal as often as they are in town.” In a twist on attending a sporting event together, Sarver

invites clients to attend a networking function of their choice, where he pays for the tickets. “That way, they get the benefit of attending a desired event, meeting people who may be able to assist them with their non-legal professional needs, and we get to connect and bond in a different context.”

While larger firms may host a client appreciation event, solo attorneys have the opportunity to be more creative when planning a similar activity. Slonim is in the process of organizing “a program with some clients as speakers to showcase their thought leadership and expertise to the broader community.” Collaboration is also a viable and valuable possibility. Heyman and a small group of contacts co-host networking events for creative industry professionals. “These provide my clients, prospective clients, colleagues and friends of the firm, an opportunity to connect with other professionals and creatives with the hopes of bringing about mutually beneficial relationships. The events may have a minimal charge, which is helpful to defray the cost of the rental space, food, beverages, etc.”

Monthly bills offer yet another way to thank clients. Sarver and Slonim show client appreciation throughout the year when they reference brief conversations and emails with clients on their bills and do that *free of charge*. Likewise, Gordon chooses to offer a sizeable discount in fees to steady clients; in addition, “I often will assist referring attorneys free of charge, or at very little cost, on personal matters, as a professional courtesy.”

Periodic thank you cards at other times of the year underscore the valued connection you have with a client. Randall Hirsch, not surprisingly, often develops warm relationships with his personal injury and medical malpractice clients at [Law Office of Randall J. Hirsch](#). These litigations may extend over a long period of time, allowing for a higher degree of professional and personal intimacy. Hirsch now chooses to acknowledge these close-knit ties by mailing cards to celebrate milestones in his clients’ personal lives. Similarly, Sarver also sends a thank-you card at an off-peak time, usually in the spring; that way, “my card does not get lost in a sea of other well-wishers around the holidays.”

Watkins, who periodically “treats at least two clients or prospective clients per month for lunch or coffee,” says “I think holiday time is the best time for showing client appreciation. Considering this question is making me think I might incorporate more appreciation activity during the rest of the year.”

Perhaps you agree and now will be inspired to show client appreciation in a new way in the course of the year ahead.

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