Converting Prospects into Clients
By Michael L. Goldblatt

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In the middle of the Great Depression of the 1930's, Dale Carnegie wrote a best-selling book about marketing yourself by being attentive, friendly, and sympathetic. The book was titled How to Win Friends and Influence People. Over 30 million copies have been sold around the world. Read on for tips and resources for using Carniegie's methods to convert prospects into clients.

Automating. Use practice management software to improve client intake, timekeeping, invoicing, and tracking. Consider using a virtual receptionist and an automated response system.

Delegating. Use an assistant to screen inquiries for conflicts, problems, information gathering, and scheduling appointments.

Documenting. If the client is a good fit, send an engagement letter to confirm fee arrangements, timing, and scope of representation. If the client is a bad fit, send a non-engagement letter to confirm that a client relationship has not been created.

Empathizing. Ask open ended questions to give prospects an opportunity to talk about themselves. Show empathy by expressing concern and mentioning how you can help.

Following Up. After a prospect's first contact, send a written communication to express appreciation and your interest in representation. Consider attaching an article that is relevant to their concerns.

Impressing. Express an attitude of confidence and emphasize your strengths and things you may have in common. Stay professional in your demeanor and presentation.

Organizing. Create a system for checking for conflicts, scripts for responding to inquiries, and forms for client intake. Check your calendar to confirm that you will be able to accommodate, timetables, filing deadlines, and statutes of limitations.

Responding. Make a good first impression with same-day responses even if it just to advise that you received the message and let them know when to expect a detailed response. Mention office hours and emergency phone numbers in your voicemail greeting. Include your office address, hours, and emergency contact information in automated replies to email.

Training. Train your staff about the importance of clients and solving their problems. Remind staff to talk to prospects in a friendly manner and to show concern. Monitor staff to assure that inquiries are promptly and effectively handled.

Website - Publish a firm brochure at your website. Include office hours, contact information, areas of expertise, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Resources. To develop a client focus, read Carnegie's book and articles about his methods. Improve your success at winning clients by reading articles about automating tasks, converting leads, creating checklists, designing websites, handling phone inquiries, making good impressions, improving client relationships, managing intake, keeping connected, professional makeovers, and streamlining procedures. Get organized by using intake checklists, forms and software reviews available from the ABA and state bar associations. Enhance your skills by viewing a webinar about automating intake or a PowerPoint about intake techniques. Stay current on client development by subscribing to a marketing newsletter or a practice management blog.

Conclusion. Blogs, directories, websites, and other marketing activities will bring phone calls and e-mails from prospective clients. You can convert these prospects into clients by following Carnegie's simple and inexpensive methods. Use the tips and resources mentioned in this article to adopt Carnegie methods at your firm. Focus your staff on client development by forwarding this article to them with your suggestions for action items.

About the Author
Michael L. Goldblatt has authored many books and articles about marketing for lawyers.