

The Power of Surveys: Improve the Experiences of Your Clients and Staff

Christopher Earley

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Surveys show that surveys never lie. —Natalia Angier

I have recently begun to send out surveys to both staff and clients. Through these surveys, I have received feedback I would not have otherwise received. Surveys, I believe, are golden opportunities that far too few law firms take advantage of. This is free, low-hanging fruit that should be consistently taken advantage of to consistently improve your practice. Surveys are powerful and even transformative for a law practice. But as with anything, they are useless unless acted on. Surveys can be used and leveraged to continually improve both the staff experience and the client experience at your office. I have discovered that not every staff member or client completes these brief surveys, but those who do give me great insight that I can act on in order to get better. Here are some considerations to keep in mind when you start using surveys.

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Staff Surveys

I believe the most important survey a law firm owner can undertake is a staff survey. After all, the more you show your staff that you care, the more they care about your clients. When you survey your staff, you get incredible insights into how things can be improved for them. These surveys can be anonymous to encourage frank and honest feedback. At my office, I have begun sending surveys to staff members each month through an automated sequence that eliminates the need for me to manually send them out every time.

These staff survey questions focus on how I am doing as a leader of the firm. I want to know what I am not seeing so that I can improve it. At the same time, I also want to know what is working so that I can double down and do more of it. An added benefit of staff surveys is they show that I want to get better as a leader and that I need team member feedback to do that. Of course, by soliciting feedback, you are definitely putting yourself out there and making yourself vulnerable to your team. I believe it is also true, however, that this demonstration of vulnerability actually makes you look quite strong in the eyes of staff. The fact that you are putting yourself out there and asking for criticism is a hallmark of respected leadership. My success is directly tied to my ability to retain high-performing team members. To do that, I must know what they like and don't like about working at my firm.

Client Surveys

Like staff surveys, client surveys are extremely important for smoking out problems you may not even know exist. These surveys focus on the client experience. To elicit this feedback, my firm has recently begun deploying client surveys through a client portal that all clients are encouraged to sign up for at the beginning of their case. I want to "touch" them with surveys a few different times during the case so that I can fine-tune and improve each stage of the case. These touch points give me insight into different stages of the client journey and how the clients feel generally at these various stages. As with staff surveys, the mere fact that you conduct client surveys shows all your clients that you care about and want their feedback so that you can make improvements for them. And as with staff surveys, although you are being vulnerable because you don't know exactly what you are going to hear in

response, I believe clients respect this vulnerability that you are taking on. Clients will respect that you want to improve, and the feedback they give to you is a golden opportunity for you to deliver better and better services, as well as experiences, for your clients.

Getting Started

The great thing is that you don't even need to spend much money to conduct surveys. While we do spend money on automation software, there are numerous websites, such as [SurveyMonkey](#), that are very inexpensive. Additionally, there are free survey services available, such as [Google Forms](#). Regardless of which survey method you use to elicit feedback, you may find that, when you begin the survey process, the feedback you receive is more negative than you were hoping for. Don't let that dissuade you. This is normal and expected at first. However, I have personally found that the survey feedback gradually starts to improve as I fix the issues that people are telling me about in their surveys.

If you want to see the staff and client surveys I use, please send me an email at cearley@earleylawgroup.com, and I would be happy to share them with you. And as always, if you have feedback and other suggestions on this topic, please email me because I would love to hear from you.

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