

The Golden Rule Revisited: Treating Clients How They Want To Be Treated

[LAW.com/newyorklawjournal/2024/09/12/the-golden-rule-revisited-treating-clients-how-they-want-to-be-treated](https://www.law.com/newyorklawjournal/2024/09/12/the-golden-rule-revisited-treating-clients-how-they-want-to-be-treated)



By Ioana Good; New York Law Journal

For generations, we've been taught the Golden Rule: Treat others as you would like to be treated. This principle has guided personal interactions, business dealings, and even marketing strategies. However, in the realm of modern marketing, adhering too strictly to this rule may be holding you back from truly connecting with your clients and growing your business.

While the Golden Rule is rooted in empathy and good intentions, it assumes that everyone shares your preferences, needs, and desires. In reality, your clients are diverse individuals

with unique perspectives, challenges, and goals. What works for you may not resonate with them. Consider this scenario: You're a tech-savvy marketer who prefers concise, data-driven communications. Following the Golden Rule, you might craft marketing messages filled with statistics and brief bullet points. However, if your target audience consists of storytelling enthusiasts who value emotional connections, your approach falls flat, and instead of inspiring action, you may alienate them by failing to address their core needs.

“Attorneys are often focused on billable hours and may miss the bigger picture of each client’s unique challenges and goals,” said Peter A. Johnson, Esq., founder and president of Law Practice Consultants. “The most successful attorneys we coach are those that build lasting relationships with their clients and are always there when needed to help.”

Instead of projecting your preferences onto your clients, the key to successful marketing, especially when it comes to thought leadership and PR, lies in understanding and catering to *their* specific needs and desires. This approach can be summed up as: Treat clients the way *they* want to be treated. But to do this, you really must commit to understanding the target audience and speaking to the unique problems they face. The key is to listen to the trends and pain points that come up consistently from your client base, and to make note of them for your and your team’s reference.

The great news is that markets are continuously shifting, and clients always face fresh challenges. This creates ongoing opportunities for you to serve as a solution provider. Whether it’s through thought leadership pieces, case studies, or personalized email campaigns, make it clear how your expertise and offerings can address their specific needs, keeping your communication relevant and client centered.

“Listening is truly a skill that differentiates one attorney from another. People will share so much about who they are, the help they need, and what matters to them with those that actively listen to them,” said Elle Walch, Practice Development Manager at Holland & Knight.

By really listening and treating clients the way they want to be treated, you’re not forming simply transactional relationships; you’re laying the foundation for sustainable business growth. This approach fosters trust, builds credibility, and positions your company as a true partner in your client’s success. Remember, the goal isn’t to completely discard the traditional Golden Rule but to *evolve it*. The empathy and consideration it promotes are still valuable. Instead, think of this new approach as an evolution – one that combines empathy with deep client understanding to create more meaningful and effective marketing strategies.

“We know that clients choose to work with us because they trust us to listen and solve their problems,” said Anne Humphries, who is in charge of business development at Lacey

Lyons Rezanka. “It’s so important for us to understand how to build long-term relationships as these have proven to be the real driver of growth for our firm.”

While the old adage of treating others as you would like to be treated has its merits, in legal marketing, the true path to success lies in treating clients as they want to be treated. By aligning your solutions with their desires and needs, you’ll not only fuel business growth but also cultivate a loyal client base that consistently turns to you for solutions. They will see you as a trusted partner who deeply understands and prioritizes their needs, leading to stronger relationships, increased client satisfaction, and a lasting reputation for the gold standard of excellence.

Ioana Good is the founder of Promova, an international PR and branding agency. She is also the co-founder of Find A Rainmaker, an online assessment that provides behavioral insights to help companies generate revenue. For any questions, reach out to igood@getpromova.com.