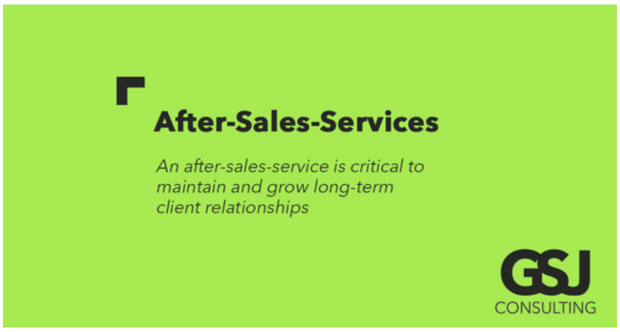

5 after-sales services you should be providing to your clients

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At GSJ we often hear professionals say “client relationships” are critical to maintaining and growing their business. Vital to this ‘maintain and grow’ client strategy is an ability to foster long-term relationships with both existing and new customers. But, with most service-based professional businesses – such as legal, accounting, engineering – relationships with customers tend to be transactional.

This leads us to the question:

“How can you, as a professional, balance a transactional practice with a need to foster long-term client relationships?”

The answer is to apply a rigorous after-sales service methodology to all of your client relationships.

What is after-sales service?

Mindful that the term ‘sales’ is particularly offensive in most professional services firms, before we jump into how an after-sales methodology could transform your practice, let’s first take a look at what we mean by ‘after-sales service’.

As the name suggests, ‘after-sales service’ refers to the service you provide to your customer post completion of a transaction or outside of usual transaction conversations.

Why do I need an after-sales service strategy?

Employing an after-sales service methodology is one of the surest and easiest ways to achieve higher customer satisfaction and, therefore, customer stickiness. Adopting an after-sales service methodology goes a long way to building brand loyalty.

Importantly, it will help with client referrals – because happy clients are far more likely to refer customers to you than unhappy ones. Clients who feel they are being used or only receiving optimal service for individual transactions are far less likely to be happy with the service they receive than those who get a much deeper customer service experience.

Importantly though, happy clients are far more likely to be profitable for your business than unhappy clients!

5 after-sales services you can provide your clients today

If you are looking to adopt an easy to implement after-sales service methodology, then here are 5 things you can start doing straight away.

Offer a Help Desk service

> Set up a dedicated client Help Desk number/email that can be called/or emailed any time of the day or night. Give limited access to this Help Desk free of charge – say up to 15 minutes without any need to do research.
>
> Not only is this a really good after-sales service, but it’s also an amazing way to increase file opportunities, as many of these “free” 15-minute calls will convert into instructions on a new piece of work!

Offer matter debrief sessions

> Offer to do a debrief session with the client following the close of the matter where you undertake a ‘lessons learnt’ process.
>
> This is a really good way to get feedback from the client about the service you provided during the transaction. It also provides an opportunity for the client to highlight some of the things you didn’t do so well and can be improved upon the next time. Note the reference to ‘next time’ here is deliberate!

Set up a Client Relationship Management (CRM) team

> Being transactional doesn’t prohibit you from setting up a CRM team approach that will allow you to have regular check-in meetings with the client. You can also schedule regular check-in calls.
>
> During these meetings and calls you can discuss potential forthcoming issues – such as

legislative changes or economic headwinds. The idea here is not to be selling anything, but to be educating the client that may have some near-term issues to address.

Training

Offer to provide a bespoke training program to the client, either on issues relating to the transaction you have just completed with them or on issues more broadly that you know will be of interest to their business.

Value-added services

Offer the client value-added services, such as subscribing to your newsletters, access to your meeting rooms, etc. Note here that nothing should stop you from charging for a value-added service if it is truly adding value to your client. In other words, value-add should not always mean “free”.

An after-sales service that did not make this list, but one I encourage all my clients to do, is to send a simple handwritten “thank-you” card to the client after the transaction completes. Lots and lots of people can easily send a quick thank-you email, but rarely do we take the time to send handwritten thank-you cards on nice paper. And that can be the differentiator when the client is looking to hire a professional with your skills in the future. Because at the end of the day, client service matters so make sure you are doing everything you can to get it right!

If you’re looking to implement an after-sales-service program into your business, but you’re not quite sure where to start, get in touch.
