Maine Chapter

NEWS BULLETIN

EDITOR: Lee Anne Carver
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May 1, 2015

Message from the President:

Congratulations on completing another successful tax season! Albeit, our profession can be stressful, most of our clients are grateful for the services we provide. I say most because we all have "special" clients that have a special place in our hearts. You know the ones I'm referring to; clients who drop off paperwork and call daily to see if it's ready, clients who consistently wait until April 15th to drop off bags or boxes full of receipts and expect us to complete their return in an hour, and clients who anticipate completed and timely returns when they can't pay for our services. These clients can be ulcer inducing headaches.

But, these are our clients. Without clients we would not have a business or way of providing for our families. Now is the time to stop and review our client lists. Who are the troublemakers? Who can we live without? How can we improve our operations and services? What can we do to improve the relationships we have with these "special" clients? Once you make a plan, the most important thing is to follow through.

There are many articles for "firing" clients (see below). There are clients who are dishonest and not willing to change, these are worthy of firing. Just keep in mind, this is how we make a living. How do we treat "special" clients? We should treat them as paying customers.

Rebekah Roy, EA

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

A SPECIAL WELCOME TO SOME NEW MEMBERS TO NATP IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS:

Yvonne Brooker, Waterville
Andrew J. Connors, Gray
Kurt Fortier, Dover-Foxcroft
Thomas Gallant, Biddeford
Edward Karass, Whitefield
Michael Morin, Lewiston
William Norwood, Manchester
Sean O'Hare, South Portland

So glad you are with us and hope to see you at some of the Maine Chapter events!

Do you enjoy reading electronic versions of our newsletter or do you prefer a hard copy?

Is there an education topic you would like to see addressed?

What changes have you implemented in your business that have caused growth?

We want YOU involved to make a successful Maine Chapter and a newsletter. If you have articles you would like considered or something of interest, I welcome them at:
Leeannecarver3@gmail.com

2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

June 19, 2015
9 am to 5 pm
REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 8 am

Registration Fees:
(On Site Lunch included)

NATP Members:
Before June 15 , 2015 $100.00
After June 15, 2015 $125.00

Non-Members:
Before June 15, 2015 $125.00
After June 15, 1015 $150.00

CPE's = 4

USM
Abromsom Center
88 Bedford St
Portland, Maine 04101

Register online at:

www.NATPME.com/Education
or call:
800.558.3402 ext. 3

Based on feedback and suggestions, the following subjects will be on the agenda:

Maine Revenue Services – Sales, Estates and Income Tax topics

Internal Revenue Services – IRS Liaison Q&A

Kevin Monroe,ChFC, CLU, FIC, Monroe Financial, Modern Woodman of America – Retirement Planning

ROUND TABLE OPEN DISCUSSION

Tell Your Tax Clients, "You're Fired!"

By Natalia Autenrieth

It won't be long before tax season gets underway again, and before the upcoming busy season fades from mind to join all previous busy seasons, I encourage you to reflect. Think about your clients because, after all, they're the people who contribute significantly to making your busy season what it is, in all its glory and misery. My question for you is: which three clients are you going to fire?

Wait a minute, you might say. What do you mean by "firing" a client, let alone three of them? Isn't it hard enough to get clients in this economy? And, isn't it the goal of one's practice to have as many clients as one can squeeze in? Sure, those few troublesome clients might be consuming an inordinate amount of your time, energy, hope and sunshine. But how do you decide if—and when—is the right time to draw the line?

Allow me to offer a roadmap. Feel free to re-draw it to suit your own practice, tolerance levels and ultimately your vision for what you are trying to build.

1.Define the criteria that will get a client "fired."

Walking away from a paying client (they were paying you, right?) can be scary. You probably won't feel completely secure about firing clients until you have a well-oiled marketing machine or referral network, bringing in bigger, faster, better clients at the push of a button.

Setting aside the scary factor, remember that the true performance standard in an organization is "whatever does not get you fired." The same could be said about the standard of your client roster. So, what will get your client "fired"?

While specific criteria will vary from practitioner to practitioner, here are some ideas to get you started:

• The client lied to you. It does not matter whether the lie was a big or a small one. The lack of integrity on the client's part opens you up to unanticipated risks and second-guessing. Face it: do you want to be associated with a client you cannot trust?

• The client is verbally or physically abusive. Nothing sucks the hope and sunshine out of the office faster than an abusive client. Negativity ripples through the office, potentially compromising your relationships with staff members, and the service delivered to other clients.

• The client has unreasonable expectations and is never satisfied. Take it as a sign that this client is probably not a good fit for your practice. Perpetual complainers don't make the best referral resources, either.

2. Ask yourself, "Can this client be retrained?"

You have worked hard to build this client relationship. Can it be saved? It depends. Remember that in training clients, as in parenting small children, being selective and consistent about rules is the single most important variable that you can control. Be crystal clear about where you draw the line and be prepared to defend it, politely and firmly, every single time it is crossed. As with parenting, setting a boundary that you are not committed to enforcing is worse than not setting one at all. However, persistence and patience have shown good results in the following areas of infraction.

• Is the client habitually late with their deliverables and last-minute requests, making your team scramble and work until midnight to get the return in on time? Perhaps this is the time to redefine the deadline.

Set the deliverable due date 30 days early, and be clear that missing that deadline will mean the return will be filed late. Be prepared to stand your ground: clients can be just like toddlers in pushing the boundary to see whether you really meant it.

• Is the client a habitual time thief? Does he or she cause a "caller ID cringe" across the office? Try opening the conversation with, "I only have a couple of minutes. How may I be of service?" to help them get to the point. If they fail to do so in a reasonable time (my threshold is 90 seconds, what is yours?), tell them that you have another client commitment, and ask them to summarize their question in an email.

• Does the client make uninformed judgment calls that make your job harder? Consider ways to help them make better decisions. Encourage them to consult with you when in doubt.

Will some of your clients walk as a result of this game-changer? Maybe. However, look at them one by one as they leave, and ask yourself how hard do you want to work to keep them? Because your next step is to get even better clients!

3. Get perfect clients.

Keep your marketing and referral machine going no matter how busy you get, or what the economy is doing. Marketing is one of the eight critical fundamentals for running a professional practice in Doug Autenrieth's "Grow on Purpose," and with good reason. Flow creates hope. Having too many qualified prospects is not a bad problem to have!

As a general rule, as much as possible, only keep the clients who are a good fit for you. They are the only ones that will stick with you for the long term and will be a solid referral source. Unless you have a great personality fit with a client and a genuine desire to serve them, friction, lack of care and disinterest will eventually result in things slipping through the cracks.

For larger, well-established practices that are running at or close to capacity, consider using the 80/20 rule. What are the characteristics and qualifications of the clients in your "best 20 percent"? Only hire the new clients who have those qualifications. And, every time you do that, fire someone in your bottom 20 percent. As you do so, the inherent quality of your practice—and your life—will soar!

So, which three clients will you fire? And what does your perfect client look like?

Maine Chapter of NATP

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MAINE CHAPTER
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~What do you, as NATP members, expect from our Maine Chapter Board of Directors?

~How can we help you in your day to day office practice?

~What would you like for educational classes that are not provided by National?

~~PLEASE contact any one of us!

~~**We are here to work for YOU!**

The MAINE CHAPTER

Of

NATP

Needs

YOU!

TO

VOLUNTEER