

COMPARISON OF CLIENT LISTENING METHODOLOGIES

This ready reference table outlines the various ways in which law firms can obtain feedback from their clients and summarises the pros, cons and uses of each method. For tailored advice on the design of a client listening programme for your firm please contact Sally Dyson at Firm Sense.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Uses
Ad hoc	<p>"Checking-in" with clients is an essential part of a client partner's function.</p> <p>A skilful partner may perform this role very well.</p>	<p>Many partners are not skilled in this activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may be inconsistent, • irregular, • poor methodology, • often un-documented, • results not shared with team or rest of firm, • may not cover relevant points and • clients may hold back. 	Relationship maintenance
Market research	Can survey a wide number of respondents and is particularly helpful with benchmarking against competitors.	<p>May be too generic, and therefore too shallow.</p> <p>Researcher may have insufficient information about either firm or client.</p>	<p>Benchmarking</p> <p>Perception studies</p>
Questionnaires	<p>Standardised format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easily delivered, • easy to compare responses and • CRM systems can ensure questionnaires are always sent out and chase up responses. 	<p>Client disengagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • boring, • does not feel personal and • tick box approach doesn't appeal. 	<p>Post matter reviews</p> <p>Tracking consistent service delivery and quality standards around firm</p>
Relationship partner meetings	<p>Shows that partners care about their clients and the quality of their service delivery.</p> <p>Can use as an opportunity to build rapport and trust.</p>	<p>Partner may not be skilled in this activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • results not always documented or shared, • may avoid awkward issues, be defensive or not "hear" or not report back bad news, • may leap to assumptions, • clients may hold back, and • too much back slapping. <p>Partner may always be too busy or too concerned about billable hours targets to conduct the interviews.</p>	Relationship maintenance

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Uses
Practice head or managing partner meetings	<p>Shows commitment from firm to the relationship.</p> <p>Can address concerns that couldn't be raised with relationship partner.</p> <p>In certain circumstances can use to ascertain cross selling and up-selling opportunities.</p> <p>Can answer any client questions about the firm.</p>	<p>Partner may not be skilled in this activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may be defensive or not hear bad news or may leap to assumptions and • clients may hold back to anyone from the firm. <p>Clients dislike relationship reviews being used as overt sales opportunities.</p> <p>Opportunity cost of fee earning vs client relationship management.</p>	<p>Strengthening and expanding relationship</p>
Retired partner interviews	<p>Retired Partners may be considered as independent from the firm but have good knowledge of firm.</p> <p>Shows commitment from the firm to the relationship.</p> <p>Can address concerns that couldn't be raised with relationship partner.</p> <p>Should be able to answer client questions about the firm (if kept up to date).</p>	<p>Retired Partner may not be skilled in this activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retired partners may be too closely associated with the firm in the client's mind and client may hold back, • may have "old guard" attitudes and • may be defensive, or not hear bad news or leap to assumptions. 	<p>Depth relationship or service reviews</p>
Third party consultant interviews	<p>Shows investment in the relationship from the firm.</p> <p>Interviews are conducted by a skilled professional.</p> <p>Consultant is incentivised to deliver high quality, timely reports.</p> <p>Consistent approach and report format.</p> <p>Clients are more forthcoming to an independent interviewer.</p> <p>Consultant can interview a broad spectrum of clients, spot trends and share market intelligence.</p>	<p>Cost (although weighed against a partner's time costs, third party consultants price very competitively).</p> <p>Learning curve – it is essential that the consultant is well briefed by the firm.</p>	<p>In depth qualitative interviews regarding service delivery, relationships, transaction reviews, client perceptions, client audits, branding, strategic change and more.</p>