

**Ep #95: Beyond Marketing: How Client Communication
Builds Engagement and Improves Practice Flow
with Strawberry Nevill**



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John E. Grant

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John: Legal professionals often think of communication strategy as part of their marketing, a way to attract and convert clients to their law practice. But a quality communication strategy can be so much broader. It's not just about getting clients to sign your engagement letter, but about keeping them genuinely engaged throughout the course of their matter. It's a tool for continuously re-recruiting the client to their own cause and for making sure you and the client are truly aligned around solving their legal issue.

Now, my primary focus with firms is helping them build smooth and predictable processes, but over the years, I've learned that the way you communicate with your clients, how you update them, how you ask for information, and how you help them understand what's next, is often the single best investment you can make in streamlining the internal workflows of your practice.

In this week's episode, I sit down with legal communication strategist Strawberry Nevill to explore how intentional, ethical communication can not only drive demand, but help shape it, and how once a client has signed on with your firm, clear communication can align expectations and make your practice run more smoothly from the inside out.

You're listening to *The Agile Attorney Podcast*, powered by Agile Attorney Consulting and Greenline Legal. I'm John Grant, and it is my mission to help legal professionals of all kinds build practices that are profitable, sustainable, and scalable for themselves and the communities they serve. Ready to become a more Agile Attorney? Let's go.

Hey everyone, welcome back. So I am excited this week to introduce you all to my new friend and co-collaborator on a project that you'll hear about here in a few minutes, Strawberry Nevill. Strawberry is a legal marketing consultant, but really with a focus on getting really solid content and content marketing. And we'll talk a little bit about that, too. So, Strawberry, welcome to the podcast.

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Strawberry: Thank you so much for having me, John. Do you want me to do a quick little intro?

John: Yeah, tell us about your journey, because you've got a good one.

Strawberry: Oh, thank you. So as you said, I'm a writer, I'm a legal marketing consultant. I'm also a former lawyer. So I'll give you a little quick background. So I actually started my career on a domestic violence crisis line. And I moved from that role into kind of a paralegal type role with the DOJ in Oregon, doing administrative child support orders, and that's a lot of what inspired me to go to law school.

As a lawyer, I practiced for 3 years. I was in a small firm, and we represented unions and people injured by police or in prison. And I did all the newer lawyer stuff, you know, lots of research, lots of writing, but because we were small, I got to do a few trials, and I also got to spend a lot of time working with our clients.

Some of that was operational communications, you know, the case updates and that kind of thing. But I also got to do some like education, like real education that was about like supporting clients' agency and helping them make informed choices and helping them be active in their cases rather than kind of following. Some of that was one-on-one. I also did Know Your Rights trainings in the community and with union organizers and that kind of thing.

And I love that work. Ultimately, practicing wasn't quite the right fit for me, or really, litigation wasn't quite the right fit. I did policy work for the state for a few years. And when I left that role, I didn't originally plan to start the consulting business that I started, but I did a little side project for a friend's marketing agency, and it just clicked. I've always loved writing, and it was just, it was right. But originally, I really wrestled with the idea of marketing work. You know, I think a lot of lawyers are really uncomfortable with

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marketing. You know, there's ethical duties, like a really special relationship with clients. And some marketing just is not compatible with those things.

But what I've learned is that marketing can also be honest, thoughtful, intentional communication that helps people make decisions that improve their lives. And so my work today really draws on a lot of my favorite parts of being an attorney.

You know, when we're writing a blog post or website copy, we're helping people understand something important, and we're tailoring it to who's reading it and why. We're doing strategic work. You know, we're talking about, should we even write this blog post, and why are we writing it, and is it doing what we think it is, and if not, how do we fix it?

Yeah, so that's why our conversations have been so exciting for me, talking about how to use those communications principles, which are the same as the principles as we use in like ethical, good marketing.

John: Yeah. Well, and I think, and I again, I think part of why you and I click so much is that we have a more, at least I have, and I think we share, a more nuanced definition of what marketing is for. And I think the finger in the wind definition of marketing is how to generate business, right? Generate leads, generate business.

But I think of it more as how to shape demand than just how to generate demand. And when you start thinking about using the tools of marketing and communication to shape the demand that's coming into your practice, that opens up a whole different universe of, oh, how can we use marketing and intentional communication strategically both to get the kinds of clients we want, but also to help them help themselves throughout their journey with us, right, even after they've hired us.

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Strawberry: Absolutely. I remember one of the first conversations we had, I was talking about marketing, and you were like, well, why, you know, you were like, but these folks, their phones are ringing off the hooks. Like, why marketing? And that's when we got in that conversation about how marketing is really, it's about attracting, but it's also about repelling.

And I don't mean repelling in the sense of offending people, but it's signaling to people who's right for my needs, and we're doing that in terms of trying to attract, you know, our favorite clients, the clients that energize us, and our clients are doing it too. Like they don't want to waste their time with a practice that's not a good fit for them. So it benefits everybody to use marketing strategically.

John: Right, right. I mean, it's funny. One of the short little rules of thumb that I talk about, and I learned this from someone that I used back in my legal career when I was marketing, is that someone should, within about a second and a half of landing on your website, have a clear feeling or not that says, oh, I'm in the right place. And that's okay. And if they don't have that feeling, that's great because if they leave, that is not the right person for you and your law practice.

Strawberry: Exactly. And it's not right for them either. It's benefiting everybody. And I think that's this huge opportunity that law firms have. You know, a lot of law firms, you land on their website and it's definitely a law firm. You know, there's Lady Liberty, that statue we all got for, you know, graduation present.

And you see that it's a lawyer, but like are you taking the time to think about what is your favorite client really looking for because they're not really looking for a lawyer, right? They're looking for support, they're looking for help solving a problem. They don't necessarily want to be talking to you, and they want to be in a situation where they're getting a certain feeling and a certain connection, and you can communicate that with your website.

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John: For sure. Well, and another one of the things I talk about, and I think you and I have talked about a little bit is this idea that lawyers have such a bad rap in society, whether it's because of the expense or whether it's because of the complexity or whatever it is, that in order for someone to even start looking for a lawyer, they have to get over a certain sort of emotional hurdle, right?

The cost-benefit has to be like, okay, the thing that I'm experiencing is pretty bad, so I guess I better start thinking about lawyering up, whatever it happens to be, which means that they're already in this sort of complexity, stressful situation. And then there's the whole question of how do I find a lawyer, which is its own set of complexities.

Strawberry: Definitely. Absolutely. I think that's where some of the, you know what you were talking about earlier with different types of marketing, you know, you've got like the SEO type marketing, you know, where the goal is if someone Googles family lawyer Portland, Oregon, that your website comes up, right?

Versus, you've got practices where they're really referral-based, you know, which is how a lot of people would rather find a lawyer because there's already some trust when you're getting a referral. And so then is it more about having your, you know, whatever your online presence is, because people are probably going to Google you first, kind of validate what they hoped to see.

John: Yes. Okay. Well, so I want to talk a little bit because I mentioned it in the intro, and I think most lawyers maybe have some sense of what we mean when we say content marketing, but it's probably helpful to define that a little bit. So when you approach, you know, marketing in general, right? And again, using sort of my definition of shaping demand, how does content marketing fit in? And then where do you fit in with your law firm

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clients and legal technology firm clients in terms of doing that kind of content marketing?

Strawberry: So, content marketing, it tends to be longer form. So, like if you're writing blog posts, that's content marketing. If you write white papers, and the purpose of the white paper is to help someone decide if you are the right resource for them or even if it's just to educate them, that's content marketing.

And so sometimes content marketing is more, I don't know, marketing-y, like it's more intended to help someone make a decision right then about whether to hire you, but sometimes content marketing is about awareness. It's about basically putting yourself where your clients are and making yourself useful, so you're helping them, you're giving them a sense of who you are, and then if something comes up, they might think of you. It works for some practice areas but not all, obviously.

And another piece, you know, that I think of as content marketing is, you know, some lawyers are on LinkedIn, they're making posts. I think website copy is kind of borderline, but I think it can be content type as well, especially if you are using it.

Let's say that you're using your website to help people understand what it's like to work with a lawyer. A lot of people, when they contact a lawyer, they have no idea what to expect, and they're nervous about that, right? Because, as you said, something bad happened. And so maybe you use your website, and it's not a blog post, but it's explaining, this is what it's like to work with us. We do a consultation, and then we decide together whether or not, you know, we'll go forward, and then we'll answer your call when you call us. That kind of thing.

So web content can be that way, too. But in general, I would say it's longer form, it's intended to be educational rather than salesy, and it most often

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promotes awareness of your law firm, but it can also be more like, let's make a decision now, if that makes sense.

John: Yeah. So maybe I think of it in a few different ways. And one, I love, and I can't remember, I probably first heard this a decade or more ago, but Professor Daniel Katz has a formulation around why do we hire lawyers? And he's basically boiled it down to two things. Lawyers help people mitigate risk and navigate complexity, full stop, right? And often it's both of those things, but it's almost always one or the other.

And so part of what you're describing is a good piece of legal content can help people untangle some of the complexity they're feeling around the legal process. And in doing that, you're helping that person feel empowered. And because it's your content that's helping them feel more empowered, that's going to make them more likely to hire you, whether or not you say hire me at the bottom of the post.

Strawberry: Absolutely. Yeah, and a great example, you know, I have one law firm where they have some business clients and some trust and estates clients, right? And so I will write blog posts that are kind of how-to, almost, like what to do if your parent loses capacity, you know, has dementia or what have you. You know, so it's about guardianships and conservatorships. And so like the goal is to kind of orient the reader to what do those words even mean, what kind of process might I find myself in, what are some key things I need to watch for.

And it's helpful no matter what that person does, right? They are more oriented, less stressed, and confused. Also, most people don't want to go through that process themselves. And so they might well hire this lawyer or a different one, but they can make a more informed decision about why they might want to hire a lawyer, because they can understand kind of the complexity of the process they might be entering. Does that make sense?

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John: Yes. No, totally. And I think, I just did the thing that my wife accuses me of. I just answered affirmatively by saying no. But that said, at least I'm aware of it now. She says it's a very California thing. I don't know.

But it triggers for me, I mean, I think it's a few different things, right? It's number one, just that feeling of relief. I think one place where content marketing comes up a lot is in the world of organic search engine optimization, and that's an interesting one because I think that's a world that is obviously changing because of AI.

But at least historically, I've always said, you know, when people have a question, they pop it into the Google confessional, and they have a tendency to say, okay, are there people? And Google is kind of crawling the web to figure out, are there people that have posted things that seem to answer this question. And so there's a very sort of strategic, tactical approach to content marketing that is, okay, how do we get the Google crawler to understand what question we're answering.

And that's obviously evolving now that people are using the OpenAI confessional or the Claude confessional or the Gemini confessional or Siri or you name it. But I think the same principles apply, where we are still not in a world and think we won't be for some time, where you can actually hire ChatGPT to help you with the thing, although it will be helping people with more and more issues.

But I still think that there's this overall piece, and I've talked about it on the podcast before, the bookend to Dan Katz's mitigate risk and navigate complexity formulation is this other thing that I talk about that are the social emotional needs that people have when they hire a lawyer. And in that case, they're looking for wisdom, they're looking for advice, and they're looking for consortium or companionship, like someone who they feel like is in it with them.

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And I think you're well-written legal content, even if it is quote-unquote marketing content, still can begin to develop that relationship with a prospective client, even if you haven't spoken with them yet.

Strawberry: I absolutely agree. And I have a few thoughts on SEO, and which is discovery that organic search, as well as AI. I'll bookmark those, but I agree and I think that we talk about "Show, don't tell" in writing and fiction writing, and I think that we're talking about a blog post as an example, people, when they're thinking about hiring a lawyer, one of the first things people think of is I'm not going to understand what they're talking about or like I'm going to kind of be in this impersonal system, right?

And just by the way you write your blog post, like, have you written it in a way that is accessible to the reader without being condescending? Or have you written it totally over their head with a bunch of verbs, you know, with long sentences, and so if you are thoughtfully writing to your audience, you are already communicating, I care enough to figure out who you might be and what you might need from me.

And people pick up on that. And so you can do it both explicitly, like you can write about what it's like to work with you, but you also do it implicitly by how you write everything about someone sees that kind of your front door, right? Your blog post or your web copy, you're giving them a sense of what it will be like to work with you and whether they'll feel welcome, whether they'll get that sense of consortium that you talked about.

John: Yeah. Well, and I think that taps on another thing that I have talked about on the podcast, and I know you and I have talked about, but I think there is a misunderstanding among a lot of lawyers, and it's easy to have it coming out of law school because law school sort of teaches us to be good legal technicians.

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And so there's a misunderstanding that lawyers have that what the marketplace is looking for is help with the technical aspects of whatever legal problem it is that you help solve. And you know, there are worlds where that is true, but I think for the most part in most practice areas, people are actually looking for a caregiver who can help them through a particular problem that they're experiencing and provide both expertise, but also genuine care through the process as opposed to just hiring a technician.

And again, maybe to prognosticate a little bit, I think if they're looking more and more for technicians, that's where the AI is going to get better and better because it can follow steps in a program pretty well. It can create this weird, I never know how to say this word, but simulacrum, I'm not even sure, right? But it can approximate care. It does it in this like insanely manipulative way that I think is really gross.

And some people will take it anyway because if they're not getting care in their lives in other ways, then they'll take the artificial care. But I still think there's a lot and will be a growing place for lawyers as caregivers to provide genuine human-to-human connection in ways that AI will not necessarily do, at least not in a real way.

Strawberry: I think you're right. And I think that, like I mentioned, I kind of came from like a social services background before I went to law school and I remember that mental shift where I was told, you know, I'm just a lawyer, I can only deal with this problem, but when we need to connect with our clients, we have to confront those things.

You know, like a client who is scared of me and is worried about looking dumb, and doesn't know what's going on, cannot be an active participant in their case. They can't exercise their agency, they can't help me help them. We have to address those things even though we're told that's not part of our job or our problem. It is.

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John: It so is. I sometimes I worry if I'm overusing my catchphrases sometimes, but one of my catchphrases is your license to practice law is not a limitation, right? You're not stuck inside this box just because you have a law license. Like, and particularly if you're looking at it through the lens as lawyer as educator, lawyer as caregiver, lawyer as companion might be too strong a word, but limited companion, right? We are providing a level of consortium for the particular sticky wickets that our clients are up against. And not only is it okay that we do that, it's what our clients want from us in those situations.

Strawberry: I agree. It's what they want from us, and attending to those needs also has the capacity not only to make our work more meaningful, but also make it easier and smoother. Right? Because when we're trying to distance ourselves from our client's emotional needs, we are missing an opportunity to have a better relationship with that client, have things go more smoothly, and have a more engaged client. And so, I think that the value of this kind of mindset like can't be overstated in terms of not just getting more clients or keeping your clients, but just in like your work life.

John: Right. And in my world, which is mostly operations and process and the flow of work, where I see problems with that is when you don't provide the level of care that people want, they'll keep looking for it. And they'll keep looking for it in unpredictable ways that create, you know, what listeners of this podcast have heard me refer to as failure demand, which is that stuff that takes up your finite capacity that if you had done something differently upstream of wherever that failure demand comes in, then it wouldn't have happened.

So if you're providing care, if you're providing compassion, if you're providing clear direction and context and education and even a little bit of consortium, then you're not going to have people blowing up your phone at

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4:30 on a Friday afternoon or 10:30 on a Friday night, looking for the thing that wasn't there to begin with.

Strawberry: Right. Exactly. And so we can use our communication, summing up what you're saying, that we can be actively engaged in that process of helping our clients to manage the situation that they're in, versus almost a more passive way of having our workflows be made more difficult because of it.

John: Yeah. Okay. So I'm going to acknowledge a thing right now, which is like we're not talking at least about what people would traditionally think of as marketing anymore. But I actually think it is. And so let's kind of hit on this thing that you and I have talked about, but not obviously on recording yet, this idea, and I think you said it, right, which is communication is not an act, it is this continuous process.

It's this way of relating to your clients and with your clients so that you continue to be aligned on things and are able to both sort of play the appropriate role in achieving the client's goals. Talk to me a little bit about that.

Strawberry: Okay. So I think probably more properly like marketing is a subset of communication, but like within like the marketing nerds, a lot of what we talk about is like the customer journey. So it might start with awareness, although I would say that for lawyers, you know, for law firms, the customer journey kind of starts when like something bad happens to the client.

John: Right.

Strawberry: That's kind of the start of their journey, right?

John: Yes. Yeah.

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Strawberry: And then they come along to awareness. They Google you, or their friend says that you're a good lawyer, and they should call you. So they look at your website and then maybe they do an intake call and then maybe they do a consultation and then you decide to do an, you sign the engagement letter, you are representing them through, you know, whatever, you know, your practice area is in that process and then at the end you're offboarding that client and you have ended the representation, but they go back into their life. I think you've called that their new life, John, right?

And so there are touch points throughout that journey that we can use to make things better for us and for our clients. When you send that client a case update email, you are nurturing the relationship. You know, you're communicating, you're kind of marketing, right?

John: For sure. Yeah. Well, it's something, again, another one of my catchphrases, but I talk about this with my clients all the time, that we have to continuously re-recruit the client to their own cause. And it's where, and you and I have talked about this, and I'll sort of tease that we've got a whole thing where we're going to try to teach this to folks, but just like communication is not a single act, I often think it's a shame that in legal we call our initiating contract, the engagement letter, as if engagement is a single thing, right?

Strawberry: Yes. Absolutely.

John: And engagement, and you've already used the term engagement, you know, in this conversation in the other way, which is we constantly have to keep the client engaged. We need to be making sure that they're an active participant going along the way.

Strawberry: Exactly. Yeah, and even, I know this came up in one of our previous calls, but we were talking about family law attorneys who, even

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after the case is complete, get lots and lots of inquiries from former clients, right? And that's an opportunity to use the marketing concept of like offboarding, right?

And, you know, you could create a newsletter. If you get the same five questions from every client who's finished their matter, why not have a newsletter that like addresses those things, and you can meet that need, which is going to impact you no matter what you do because they're going to call you. But you could meet that need in a way that has less impact on you.

John: Yes.

Strawberry: Yeah.

John: By creating a resource of some sort.

Strawberry: Absolutely.

John: Yeah.

Strawberry: Absolutely. Yes, that sort of goes to like the constant nature of communication. You know, not only does it happen throughout your engagement, but communication is also layered. There's a scaffolding that we do when we learn, that's literally how learning happens.

You know, at the beginning of your case, you might explain to the client what this particular matter is going to look like, and they're going to take in as much as they can, but it might be 10% because they've never heard of any of this stuff before. How did you feel in your first law school class? You were like, oh my God. That's what your client is experiencing, and they're getting divorced, right?

And so, you know, you may have to touch on those concepts multiple times so that your client is able to absorb them, and you kind of start signaling

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them early, but continue referring to them and by doing so, you can have a more educated, engaged client because they understand what's going on and how they can be part of this.

John: Yes. Well, and it's interesting as you're talking, one of the other things that occurs to me, and I don't think you and I have even talked about this much, but I'm a huge fan of phased flat fee as a way of approaching legal work. And I've had clients that have done it in family law. I mean, there's easy places to do it like estate planning and immigration where it's been flat fee for a while, but I've worked with a lot of firms that are going to phase flat fee for relatively complex issues. And it's the phase that's the key.

And part of what I like about it is you can draw for your client this roadmap, this journey map, and say, yeah, most people run through the phases in this order, but it allows you to re-communicate and sort of reconvey the important messaging for that phase when the phase arrives. And you're not in this situation where you feel like you have to like give someone the detailed information for the entire thing, soup to nuts, which of course they're going to forget 80% of it by the time they get to the really important parts.

Strawberry: Yes, that makes sense. And I won't go on a bunny trail too much about flat fee, but I use flat fees too, and they have transformed how I experience work, and I really, I think that's another piece of flat fees that I don't hear talked about enough with law firms, but again, that's, that's a little off topic.

But I agree. I think it creates this natural breakpoint to communicate. And I remember us talking about how like your primary communication with the client shouldn't be the bill, right? Like thinking also about how can we use communication throughout the relationship, so it isn't just the bill, although that is a very important time to communicate, add to that as well. And I

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think kind of that rhythm of like the phased flat fee, we've got those touch points, but then we've also got this communication throughout each phase.

John: I'm going to give you an example because I was on a fishing trip earlier this month and one of the people that was on it with me had been working with a lawyer for a thing, and knowing that I also work with lawyers, like, what the heck is up with the fact that I got this bill and every time I send an email to this lawyer, I get charged 0.2 hours for the paralegal to read the email and another 0.2 hours for the lawyer to read the email.

And I'm like, well, that's lame. There, you know, any number of thoughts on that, but the reason it comes to mind right now is that your bill is communicating lots and lots of things. And if you rely on the bill to be the only narrative, you're not controlling the narrative.

Strawberry: Yes, and even with the bill, right, there's so much communication we're doing. I mean, we think of communication as things that we say or things that we write, but it's more than that. We communicate more than that. The way that your office is set up, if you have toys in your waiting room, right? All of those things are communicating.

And the way you do your billing also communicates. I mean, what, do you bill on a regular cadence? Do clients know what to expect? Are your fee narratives like clear? Does the client understand what the heck you're even doing? Are you charging them a file maintenance fee every month, and do they understand what that is? Does it make them mad?

There's all of this other communication that as we like figure out, okay, this is the specific problem that we're having in our practice, you're going to find pieces of communication that you could target and change that to try to shift those problems.

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John: Yes. Well, and to piggyback on something we talked about earlier, if you're constantly trying to re-recruit the client to their own cause and sort of be in partnership with you, then you shouldn't be communicating things, whether it's through your bill or otherwise, that put you in an antagonistic relationship with your own darn client.

Strawberry: Yes. And I think it's so easy to get there, you know, especially like when work is stressful and you're working with clients who are also stressed, it's easy to get in that antagonistic relationship, but I think we've got to fight that, and I think that communication is an important part of how we do that. And especially like in longer matters, often like there will be these long stretches, and you know that things are just working their way through. The client doesn't know that. They're on pins and needles the whole time. So how can you have positive communication with them regularly throughout a long matter that isn't just the bill?

John: Well, it's funny, my longest time client, Jeff De Francisco on the podcast a couple of months ago, and he's now one of my co-founders in this legal tech thing, Greenline, that I'm doing, but Jeff is an estate administration attorney, and he does it for relatively high net worth individuals.

And as we were coming up with a client journey map and really using that not just to inform, okay, what are the touch points and what's the information we need from the client, but then to feed back and really shape a lot of Jeff and his team's internal processes inside of the firm, there's one particular phase that we're like, what do we call this thing?

And the name we came up with is The Long Middle. I think I was the one who first blurted it out, kind of half joking, and he's like, no, that's exactly what it is. And even naming the phase that way, number one, it's a little funny, but it tells the client exactly what to expect.

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Like, there's an initial compliance phase, and then there's this other, I forget what phase two or three is, but then we get to phase four, and phase four is The Long Middle, and it's just like, we're going to have to check in with you. We may need little bits of information, but really, it's just going to take a while, and you should just expect that it's going to take a while.

Strawberry: Yes, I love that. Like that type of like letting people know what's going to happen before it happens, so they can be ready and they aren't surprised or frightened by what happens. And I think that also brings up for me another communication principle, which is called the curse of knowledge.

And the idea is that as an expert, you don't remember, you can't remember what it felt like to be a beginner. Like you have accumulated all of these layers of knowledge over all the years of, you know, your law school and practice and everything. Client has none of that, right?

And so it's easy for us to miss stuff like, well, of course it's going to take 30 days to do blah, blah, blah. Of course, it's realistic to expect this amount of time. They don't know that. And we might forget to tell them because of the curse of knowledge. I love that name because it's like we're naming it and we're acknowledging that it's long, and like that can really help the client and like bring us together with our client.

John: Yeah. Well, and that curse of knowledge thing and I won't speak for you, but I sometimes refer to myself as the useful idiot in helping describe these workflows because especially if it's a practice area that I'm not familiar with either, I get to have that newcomer's perspective and I'm trying as much as possible to sort of take the perspective of the new client, the newbie client who really is going through this stuff for the first time.

Strawberry: Yeah, it's a huge thing like that for me doing marketing as well. Like, I'm often coming in on a discipline that I am not an expert in, right?

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And so if you're working directly with other experts, that's not great. But if you're working with people who are lay people or who have a lower level of expertise, it's a huge benefit because that person is going to help you notice the things that you've stopped noticing, because that's like how our brains work.

John: Yes. Okay. I want to come back to the bookmark that you set around SEO, AI, and all the things. And let's hit on that for a minute, and then after that, I want to talk about the fun thing that you and I are doing together in a few weeks.

Strawberry: Cool. So just a couple quick notes about SEO. You mentioned the concept of like organic search and using blog posts that might then come up in somebody's, their Google question, right? The Google machine. And that's definitely an important and it like can be a benefit of having blog posts, although they might also be part of validation when someone comes to your website through a referral. It's being called AEO or GEO, like the search assist or, you know, whatever comes up at the top of Google.

And obviously, like there's massive problems with like, I asked ChatGPT about my legal question, right? For so many reasons. But I've started to notice that when I Google something and it gives me that answer, like off to the side, it has like a link, a thing I can click on to see the websites that they got it from. And that's something that marketers are calling zero-click, right? Somebody learns something from the content marketing you've done, but they don't actually click on your website. So you don't kind of know that they heard what you screamed into the void, right?

But because in some cases they're seeing off to the side, whether they look or not, another question. I look, but seeing off to this side, you can sometimes get some of that awareness just by getting into those results. And so some folks are using kind of layout and formatting principles to make their stuff like more readable by the AI robots. This is something to

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think about. Also, I stay skeptical, I think as well as we all do. And it's, things are changing fast.

John: Things are changing fast. Well, and maybe to put in a plug for you, this is a reason to hire someone who is a professional content marketer that's going to help you stay on top of some of these emerging trends. I mean, I suppose you can also ask Google or ask ChatGPT what you should be doing to rank higher in AEO or whatever they all the new terms are. I don't know if that's going to be like the 67 of old people or something else, but...

Strawberry: It'll tell you.

John: Yeah.

Strawberry: But check the answer. Yeah.

John: Check the answer, I love that. Yeah.

Strawberry: And and even I work with like SEO consultants, like when I'm doing like, you know, an engagement that has like a really heavy SEO consultant, like I hire like the expert expert, you know, and so I think another good thing about working with someone who is like a, you know, consultant in the space is like we can help kind of diagnose problems and be like, oh, this won't actually fix that. You need to talk to a so-and-so and kind of help you get what you need.

John: Yes. So with that, let's transition to this little course that we're going to teach in December, at least for the first time in December. We'll see if it, if it's popular, then we'll keep doing it. So we're calling it Better Client Relationships, Fewer Interruptions. That gets to the failure demand thing that we talked about briefly. A live 90-minute workshop for lawyers that will show you how to build more peaceful, productive relationships with clients

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for the rest of your legal career. That's a big claim, but I think we can deliver on it.

Strawberry: I think so. I think we can.

John: Okay. And so to give folks just a high-level preview of what that 90 minutes is going to be like, if you sign up for the course, and we'll put all the things in the show notes, and I'll probably start putting an ad in my own podcast for it too, so you'll hear it. But how are we going to transform people's productive relationships with clients for the rest of their legal career?

Strawberry: I'll give a very high-level overview. So we are going to talk about three really important client management concepts. And I'll preview those really quickly. The clients want five things from us, that our clients are on a different journey than we are, and that there's a natural ebb and flow to client engagement.

And then talking about a mindshift that you can make in how you use communications to use those client management principles to create better client relationships, a more sustainable practice, and a happier work life.

We'll talk about using what, when, and how with your communications to be really thoughtful about both structuring your communications practices more broadly and even, like when you're writing an email, like how can I be more effective here and build a better client relationship, which is going to benefit, you know, your whole legal team in many ways.

John: Yeah, I love it. And it's not just going to be a 90-minute lecture. We use workshop for a reason. It's going to be very hands-on. There's going to be exemplars, there's going to be some actual, like working on stuff in the class, and you know, it may or may not be usable, but at least you will have

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started the process of applying some of the concepts and not just hearing a couple of folks talk about it.

Strawberry: Absolutely. And we're going to do an awesome cheat sheet so you have something to take away with you and like pin on your wall so that those concepts are right there for you whenever you're tackling a client communication.

John: Yes, love it. Okay. And so we are offering that class or that workshop on Friday, the 12th of December. And it's going to be from 10:00 to 11:30 AM Pacific, and I'll let you all do the math for what your particular time zone is. And look for a link in the show notes on how to sign up for that.

Strawberry: Yeah, we hope you'll join us. Thanks so much.

John: Okay. Well, Strawberry, thank you so much for joining me. And obviously, I wanted to promote this class, but I think so many of the principles that you offer are useful regardless of whether you come do the thing with us or not. What's the best way for people to find you on the internet and maybe get some one-on-one help from you if they need it?

Strawberry: Absolutely. Well, thank you, John, for having me. This has been fantastic. I'm so excited about our workshop. And so people can find me, I'm on LinkedIn, Strawberry Nevill. Just put it in. There's no E on the end of Nevill and strawberry, it's just like the fruit. And you can find me on LinkedIn. I'd love to connect there. I also have a website, and it's strawberrynevill.com, and you can read a little bit about me. It's easy to contact me through the website, and I'd be glad to talk with you.

John: Awesome. Okay. And we'll have all the links in the show notes, too. Strawberry, thank you so much for coming on the podcast. I'm really excited about our workshop, and I hope we'll get lots and lots of people that want to come join us.

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Strawberry: Absolutely. Thanks, John.

John: Okay. As you heard from that conversation, a good communication strategy isn't just a marketing tool. It is a practice management tool. When you invest in using strong communication to shape and enhance the overall client experience, you create stronger alignment with your clients, you reduce wait times and other friction inside your firm's workflows, and you help your overall practice run more smoothly for everyone involved.

If this conversation sparked ideas about how you can evolve your communications to improve your client experience or your team's efficiency or both, I encourage you to find one small concrete step you can take this week.

Maybe it's adding a clear punch list and an expected time commitment to your client homework requests. Maybe it's finding better ways to communicate the steps along your client journey or roadmap. Whatever it is, I encourage you find just 20 or 30 minutes to help your clients or other constituents understand things better. The investment will be well worth it.

And if you'd like to go even deeper on how to think about and structure your communication strategy, maybe do a little hands-on drafting, get some tools and templates you can put to immediate use inside your law practice, then I encourage you to sign up for the 90-minute client communications workshop that Strawberry and I are running on Friday, December 12th. To learn more about that and to register, you can head on over to agileattorney.com/ccw. That's agileattorney.com/ccw for client communications workshop. And of course, there is a link in the show notes.

As always, this podcast gets production support from the fantastic team at Digital Freedom Productions, and our theme music is Hello by Lunara. Thanks for listening, and I will catch you again next week.