

Common Mistakes that Could Cost You a Client

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Lawyer Missteps That Will Send Clients Out the Door!



The relationship between an attorney and a client is very delicate. Lawyers strive to keep their clients happy by providing this best legal services they can. Yet, too much coddling - or not enough - can cost attorneys their clients.

And then there's the issue of money. No client wants to feel "nickel and dimed."

So how can lawyers strike the right balance with their clients?

Here are some common **LAWYER MISTAKES to AVOID** in an effort to strengthen client connections.

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1. You don't advise, you solve.

All too often lawyers have a tendency to tell their clients what to do. Unfortunately, though lawyers are not problem solvers in the sense that they can dictate their clients' behaviors. Instead, offer advice by counseling a client on the full scope and implications of a problem and possible solutions.

2. You are not forthcoming about your knowledge and experience.

Clients want their lawyers to earn their trust through action, not just by their resumé. If a client discovers that he or she has not learned the complete truth about a matter, regardless of how little or how much is at stake, lawyers run the risk of not only losing the client, but also their integrity. Communicate with your client about EVERYTHING. Even if you're not sure about a development, be upfront - but also get to the bottom of it.

3. You rarely respond.

Failure to communicate is one of the biggest gripes clients have with their lawyers. But, quite frankly, there is no excuse for it. There are so many means of communication available these days - including e-mail, mail, phone, and fax. Adapt to your clients' communication preferences and RESPOND to their needs.

4. You don't meet client expectations.

In corporate environments, for example, often in-house lawyers are required to make legal decisions by committee. A frequent complaint is that their outside counsel do not anticipate this process and, as a result, do not deliver work product in a timely fashion to meet their client's needs and accommodate their processes. This problem can easily be remedied by **regularly communicating with clients regarding their expectations**.

5. You send an invoice - for everything.

This is a typical peeve for all clients.

While clients expect an invoice for outstanding matters and communications, they don't want to receive one each and every time they have contact with their lawyer. **Carefully monitor your billable time** and resist the urge to bill for every six minutes. In fact, you could include in your monthly invoice one or two instances where you communicated with the client on a matter but did not charge him or her. Show the time spent, but then beside it cite “*No charge.*” Clients love feeling that they are receiving a few valuable “off the clock” minutes with their lawyer.

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Clients want to feel valued and important, so give them the attention and respect they deserve!

After all, they're paying *you*! You'll want to keep them around - and happy - for a long time.

Article adapted from [Six Ways to Lose a Client and How You Can Avoid Them](#) by Kimberly Alford Rice.

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