

The WRIT

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WASHOE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

President's Message



I hope this message finds all of our members in good health during this challenging time. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of us. Some of our members may know someone who has contracted the virus, or healthcare workers and others who are on the front lines dealing with the virus. Many of us have family members or friends with underlying health conditions or who are otherwise vulnerable to the virus; we protect them by staying away. Many of us are working remotely while doing our best to simultaneously take care of young children and tend to their distance learning curriculum. Others may be facing challenges transitioning from their traditional business models during this time, especially as in-person appearances have been nearly eliminated. Whatever challenges you may be facing, you are certainly not alone.

Although things continue to change every day, I have seen one constant in the

community: human kindness from six feet away. At the grocery store, a customer gave up a place in line to allow an elderly person to check out first. Lawyers have demonstrated understanding and courtesy to other lawyers in the form of extensions, stays, and other accommodations. Staff members have gone above and beyond to work together to get the work done. Many of us have been blessed with help from our parents taking care of our children before the pandemic started. We may reciprocate now by buying groceries for our parents during this time to minimize their exposure to the outside world. If you are like me, your family has shown the utmost patience while you try to get it all done. When I take my daughter on walks, almost everyone we encounter says “hello” from a distance. I am sure all of us have seen many such examples of human kindness during this time.

My mother always says when I battle a long-lasting challenge, “This too shall pass.” We are all going through this together as a legal community, and we will all come out of this on the other side together. When we do, I hope we will remember to keep a little extra of that human kindness in our practice and profession.

Like many other organizations, we have cancelled our luncheons and other in-person events during this time. However, we will continue to distribute The Writ. Our publisher is closed, so we hope you enjoy our temporary “virtual” format during the pandemic. Please feel free to contact the WCBA if you are facing a challenge. We will do our very best to assist or provide you with information for a resource to assist. Until we see you again, take care of yourselves, my friends.

MILLENNIAL MINUTE

By Kelci Binau, McDonald Carano

Happy Clients, Happy Practice!

As a new attorney, the practice of attaining clients can feel somewhat foreign. While most if not all of your clients are ultimately the supervising partners' clients, it is important to treat and interact with each client as if they were your own. While it may not have been you who initially drew the client to the firm, as an associate, you often facilitate much of the fact gathering and communication with the client. Even as a novice, you play an important role in keeping the clients happy. For this reason, it is important to remain thoughtful of your relationship with the clients and the services the firm provides them. Below are a few tips and tricks to keeping clients happy.

Respond Timely: It has been mentioned before and it will be mentioned again, the top complaint clients have about their attorneys is a lack of timely communication. While it is not realistic for an attorney to be on their email 24-7, nor efficient to constantly interrupt a project to respond to emails, a good practice is to respond to emails within 24 hours. If you know you will not get to a client's matter for a week or two, calendar a reminder to reach out to the client with a status update at the end of the week. Although demanding workloads can often make the smallest "to-do" seem daunting, reaching out to a client with an update or asking for an extension will provide relief from the weight ignoring the matter will cause.

Be Clear: Although you may not want to scare your client away, it is important to clearly communicate with your client from the beginning. Discuss your evaluation of the client's case at the outset and work to set realistic expectations. Ask lots of questions at the beginning to ensure you have a clear understanding of the client's goals and that you learn the important details to run with the matter. Schedule

regular checkpoints to keep you client apprised of your progress, seek updated information, review drafts and ensure you are still on the same page.

Treat Each Client as Your Only Client: We have all worked with clients who email an "emergency" request and expect a response and a completed product immediately. Although these expectations may at times be unrealistic, it is important to remember that while you have many clients, often, you are a client's only attorney. Engaging an attorney is not a small decision to make. Clients often entrust their personal information, livelihood, savings, and security in your hands, the least you can do is reply to their emails in a timely manner when they reach out to you.

Listen: It is easy to get comfortable with using certain forms or providing specific protections; however, sometimes clients do not need, nor do they want all the bells and whistles. It is important to recognize each client's matter as unique and to align the client's needs and available resources with the appropriate level of service. For example, when a client explains they have a form lease they would like you to use and review, it is not best practice to automatically scrap the client's form and use your own. Evaluate whether you can adequately protect the client by supplementing the form with protective clauses, or whether the form is so lacking that you cannot adequately represent the client using the requested form. Give the client options, warn them of the potential challenges and issues and tell them which route you would recommend. Although you are the expert, it is up to the client to determine whether to take certain chances and which course to follow.

Get to Know Your Client's Business: While at times it may seem like your billable hours will not allow you to visit a client's store front or manufacturing facility, it is important to get to know your

client's business. Developing insights into the hows and whys of your client's business will show the client that you are a responsible and concerned advisor and will allow you to deliver more well rounded solutions. Furthermore, getting to know your client will assist the firm with cross selling. Being able to connect with your client's preferences, needs and wants will enable you to suggest additional legal services provided by other attorneys at the firm.

The moral of the article treat your clients as you would want to be treated as a client. Do not underestimate the difference taking a moment to send an email can make. Keep in mind; one of the most common ways for new clients to be referred to you and to the firm is by word of mouth. If a client is happy with your work, before long, you will be originating clients of your own.

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