



## **CLIENT ADVISORY: WAYS TO KEEP YOUR LEGAL BILLS DOWN**

1. **Contact us early.** Legal problems are like car maintenance. It is cheaper to fix the brakes than to repair the car after an accident. Our society has become so litigious that a client should not avoid seeking legal advice because of the initial cost. An attorney can often help you avoid bigger legal problems and keep you out of court -- but only if you pick up the phone and call when you have a question. The cost of a few hours of legal consultation that saves you the expense of going to court will be a true value. Call us early so we can attempt to make mole hills of your mountains.
2. **Use our Case Managing Attorneys.** Due to the increasing demand for the Partners' time, hourly rates for Partners' time have in some cases increased sharply. All cases in the office are assigned to a team, headed by a Case Managing Attorney under the supervision of a Partner. Most of the day-to-day work on a case is done or supervised by the Case Manager. The best way to avoid incurring extra charges for a Partners' time is to first contact the Case Manager assigned to your matter. The Case Manager can either resolve the issue or prepare the issue for the Partner's expedited attention.
3. **Take advantage of law firm staff.** Many of the issues that our clients contact us about concern routine administrative aspects of a case. Often, the administrative staff at the office is aware of these issues and can answer clients' questions without involving an attorney. If you are calling for routine information about your case, such as the date of the next hearing or to get a copy of something, make sure you take advantage of the secretarial help. Typically, secretarial and administrative staff time is not billed to the client. This is a great way to save money.
4. **Come to us.** Whenever possible, travel to our office to meet rather than having attorneys come to you. Although it is important on certain occasions to meet at your facilities, typically attorney-client meetings can take place at the attorney's office. This saves the billing for travel time, and for meetings which may take longer than necessary. While at the law firm, related issues that come up during the meeting can be handled immediately, avoiding the need for extra time spent once the lawyer gets back to the office.
5. **Minimize meetings, use the phone or email instead.** Personal meetings, while sometimes necessary, should be used sparingly. Most issues can be handled over the phone or through an email. Generally, email is more efficient than using the phone.
6. **Don't waste time.** Store up your questions for an attorney so you can ask them all at one meeting or during one phone call. And if possible group together your legal affairs so you can consult with your lawyer on several matters at one time. As pleasant as it may be to chat for fifteen minutes at the beginning or end of a meeting, you may be charged for some of the time.

7. **Investigate important events quickly.** If something happens that may later develop into a claim for or against you or your company, it should be investigated immediately. Call us to discuss the best way to conduct the investigation, perhaps through the firm to bring the results under the attorney-client privilege. A contemporaneous recording of an event is more credible than one recorded at a later time. The memorandum or e-mail written during the crisis is much more believable than the one you prepared for your attorney after the fact. Craft it carefully and preserve it.
8. **Help Out.** You can do some of the work yourself. Often a client will leave the identification and organization of relevant documents until the last minute, or leave it for the lawyer to do. This is inefficient, causes the attorney to work in a "crunch," which will increase your legal costs. Having the relevant documents available and organized when you meet with your attorney will reduce your legal bill. You can also help identify potential witnesses, and write out a chronology of events with cross-references to relevant documents. Lawyers have unique skills. The idea is to make the best use of your lawyer's time, not waste it doing routine tasks.
9. **Keep your bills current.** This firm, unlike many others, does not charge for addressing a client's billing concerns when they are brought to our attention. *If the client calls our office* with a question about billing, we do not charge for resolving the issue. If however, we are forced to contact the client about an outstanding balance, we *do* charge for that time. We also impose significant finance and carrying charges on outstanding balances. The easiest way to avoid these charges is to pay all undisputed portions of your bill promptly, and raise any issues and concerns you have over disputed portions of a bill with us immediately. These concerns can almost always be addressed and appropriate adjustments made to our clients' satisfaction.
10. **Complete and return the client satisfaction survey.** Each month we send out a client satisfaction survey with your billing statement. We are very anxious to resolve minor disputes, whether or not related to billings, before they become major issues. If you send this survey back, or simply call us, we *will* consider your comments and attempt to address your concerns promptly.
11. **Use non-lawyer professionals.** Non-lawyer professionals can perform some "legal" tasks as well as lawyers at a lower cost. For example, look to management consultants for strategic business planning; real estate brokers or appraisers for valuation of properties; accountants for preparation of financial proposals; insurance agents for advice on insurance protection. Each of these concerns may have a legal aspect, and you may eventually want to consult your lawyer, but normally you won't need to until you've exhausted less expensive ways to accomplish the task. On the other hand, when sensitive issues are involved or an investigation is being conducted, consult us to determine whether the work should be done under the auspices of the firm, so the work is protected by the attorney-client privilege.