PRACTICE TIPS

TEN TIPS TO IMPROVE CLIENT RELATIONS

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1 Remind your staff that having a good relationship with the client is the best preventative measure that can be taken against malpractice, and that they are critical to this relationship. Encourage your staff to treat clients as though they were guests in their own homes, including greeting every guest, and offering a smile and a cup of coffee. Also remind staff to answer phone calls quickly and professionally.

2 When meeting with a client, ask your staff to hold your calls, and then give your full attention to that client. Challenge yourself to do as much listening in the meeting as you do talking. Ask your client if they have any questions and make them feel like they are your only client (no checking your watch or your smart phone).

3 Turn on the out-of-office feature on your e-mail if you plan to be out for even just half a day. Ensure that the auto reply has adequate instructions for how your client may reach someone who can help them while you are away.

4 Whenever something significant happens affecting a client's matter, send a status report and follow up to confirm the report was received and understood. Afterwards, inquire whether any other legal matters have developed that you could assist in.

5 Develop a list of firm contacts to give to new clients. Include any firm employee that they will need to know and how to reach them. When you provide them the list, also ask them how they prefer that you contact them.

6 Surprise your staff with gift cards or a catered lunch when you see them go above and beyond for a client or if they consistently assist you with providing great client relations.

7 When a matter has ended, send a thank you note to your client, in addition to the disengagement letter, to let them know how much you appreciated their business. Include a few business cards in the envelope to allow them to easily recommend you to their family, friends and colleagues.

8 Don't make your client have to refer to a legal dictionary to navigate your correspondence. Use plain language and short sentences to make every communication as clear as possible.

9 Survey your clients to see how they feel about your firm. Ask them to identify ways that you could improve. Use the information from the survey to better understand your clients' needs.

10 Inform current and former clients of new laws or cases that could affect them or their businesses, even if a new development is not relevant to matters currently being handled. You can add a personal note to the letter explaining the law's specific impact on clients who will be more directly affected.