

Tip of the Month

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P.Y.T

Depending what age range box you are checking these days (35-42, 43-50, etc.), "P.Y.T." may immediately transport you back to the Billboard Top 100 in 1982. While the acronym might mean "Pretty Young Thing" to you, in the context of attorney time management, think Prioritize Your Time. Let's review the Thriller track list for some inspiration for daily workflow habits you might implement to improve your productivity:

Wanna Be Startin' Something – Some great advice I received early in my career was to start with the task on your to-do list that you don't want to do. Also known as "eating the frog," tackling the least desirable task first thing in the morning will get it off your desk and allow you to quickly move on to other work you need to accomplish for the day. Avoid putting off the difficult client email or dreaded discovery responses and cross these items off your list right after you get to the office.

Human Nature – "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today." While some work days feel satisfyingly productive, some feel like you are running from one fire to the next. So, when you have some control over your day, take advantage of it. You never know what the next day holds, whether it be a client emergency or sick child, so accomplish everything you can and fight human nature to procrastinate and put it off until the next day or later in the week...or next week.

Beat It – While "Billie Jean" will forever be my wedding DJ request song, "Beat It" was my most played song on this album (er, cassette tape). Think "you better run, you better do what you can" as one strategy to help you manage your time throughout the day. Instead of reacting to every email notification that pings when trying to complete a task, close out your Outlook and try to work in 20-30 minute "sprints" before taking a mental break to check your email and address anything urgent that has hit your inbox.

Why is time management so critical for lawyers? From a professional responsibility standpoint, multiple ethics rules are implicated when it comes to your time. For example, ABA Model Rule 1.3 requires that lawyers act with reasonable diligence and promptness when representing a client. The Comment to this Rule actually states that "[p]erhaps no professional shortcoming is more widely resented than procrastination." **[Continued on page 2]**

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A client's interest could be adversely affected by the passage of time, or an unreasonable delay could undermine your client's confidence in you and cause them (and you) needless anxiety. So, work to develop effective time management skills.

Good time management is also a crucial component of accurate and ethical billing practices. Focusing on and completing a task typically results in more accurate time tracking so you can provide your client a reasonable bill. One component of determining the reasonableness of a fee in accordance with ABA Model Rule 1.5 is the actual time and labor required to complete the task. In other words, your ability to focus and timely complete a task can ensure your client receives the fair bill they deserve and that you are ethically obligated to provide.

What can you do to improve productivity and avoid an inquiry from your client about the matter that has been sitting on the corner of your desk far too long? Choose one morning this week to arrive early at the office. Set a timer, silence your email notifications, and use this time to handle your most daunting tasks undisturbed. If music helps you concentrate, queue up a Michael Jackson playlist and let the rhythm motivate you as you power through your to-dos.

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