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## New York Divorce and Family Law Blog

### [Client's Billing Woes: Clients Need Be Respected, Too](#)

Posted on April 28, 2010 by [Daniel Clement](#)

[Jennifer Walzer](#), in her [You're the Boss](#) blog describes how she was mistreated and taken advantage of by lawyers retained to represent her business. It is no wonder why lawyers have such a bad reputation.

In her article, Walzer describes how her lawyer's retained to represent her in connection with a relatively simple real estate lease, ran up a bill which exceeded her budget and expectations. When she questioned time charges which did not jibe with the records, she was ganged up upon and attacked.

In one case Ms. Walzer describes how she was charged \$60 for an email exchange in which she said acknowledged receipt of her lawyer's email and that she would respond in due course. The lawyer responded, "I hope everything is O.K. Take your time." When confronted, the lawyer's justification for the charge was:

Your e-mail took me away from a multimillion dollar agreement I'm working on, so if I have to stop what I'm doing to view and respond to an e-mail, then I have to charge you.

All I can say is that I am shocked and astounded.

While Ms. Walzer's matter may not have been as lucrative to the firm as the "million dollar deal" the lawyer was working on, it was important to her. Her lawyers should have treated her and their client's with the same attention and respect as they did their client "million dollar transaction client." If the matter was "below" the firm, they should not have taken on the representation.

I have candidly told some prospective client's that some cases or issues they wish me to pursue would not be cost effective for me to handle. I understand that my client's have budgets -if a case can be resolved within a client's budget, I explain why.

As a practitioner, I, more often than not, find myself not billing for causal, non substantive/social emails and telephone conversations.

Regardless, billing questions should not be handled in an adversarial manner. If the time charge cannot be justified or explained, a client should not have to pay for it. Lawyers should know, in court, you have to prove your case with competent evidence- if you can't prove your case, you lose. If the lawyers cannot justify their bill to the client, they would have a tough time in court.