

[It's the Little Things That Will Upset Your Clients](#)

Posted by [Cordell Parvin](#) on September 21, 2011

Last week I stayed in a small luxury hotel in the New York financial district. It was near the law firm office where I did two presentations. In many ways the hotel was outstanding. My room was large with wood floors. One magazine called it "the coolest hotel in the financial district."

When I woke up in the morning I went downstairs for breakfast. The restaurant was so small that the hostess was also the waitress, and for all I know, she could have cooked my meal. The first thing I noticed was the paper napkin. In a luxury hotel that is "the coolest in the financial district," I guess I expected a cloth napkin.



During my meal, my coffee became lukewarm. I asked the hostess/waitress to warm it up. When I got the bill, I noticed I had been charged for two cups of coffee. There was nothing on the menu to advise me and the waitress did not tell me I would be charged for a second cup. In my many, many years staying at hotels, I have never once been charged for a second cup of regular coffee.

I wasn't bothered by the room cost that was well over \$400 for the night. I would expect to pay that amount in the financial district of New York. I was pleased with everything about the hotel. But, it was the unexpected \$3.00 for a warm up of my coffee that I will always remember and I will tell friends who ask me for hotel recommendations in New York.

How do these little things apply to lawyers? I believe most business clients are surprised to come to a law office and find lawyers dressed in business casual. I believe those businessmen and women expect their lawyers to dress like lawyers. So, dressing in business casual is the equivalent of a paper napkin in the hotel restaurant.

Far more importantly, clients get very, very upset when there is a surprise in their bill. Sometimes the surprises are big things and that should never happen. More often it is the little things.

As lawyers, you should never surprise a client in the bill. If there is anything that could possibly be a surprise, you should alert the client before the bill goes out and discuss it.

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