



Week of **December 22, 2009**

Find Success by Looking in the Mirror

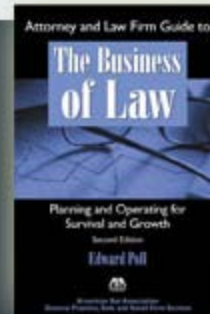
The line between success and failure at "The Business of Law®" can be a thin one. Often the considerations that make the biggest difference are nothing more or less than two sides of the same coin. Consider these examples in which the "dos and don'ts" for businesslike law firm interaction with clients are mirror images of each other.

1) **Don't** put the firm first. **Do** put the client first.

Law firms today are so preoccupied with their own survival that not enough of them are asking their clients, "How am I doing?" As a result many lawyers, unfortunately, never figure out that their client is unhappy. If they don't hear from a client after completing a matter, they just think that the client has no additional legal work. They don't realize that the client was so unhappy that, though they didn't complain, they just didn't return. Admittedly this may open a dialogue that is hard, but it should be part of any lawyer's skill set. Lawyers are skilled at persuasion with judges, juries, partners and peers. Try consciously persuading your clients and you'll have a better chance of retaining them.

2) **Don't** just take whatever clients are available. **Do** target your clients.

For too many lawyers the idea of marketing is daunting because there are so many potential clients, so little time to reach them and so many options for pursuing them. Marketing can only be approached practically with a narrow focus that creates a profile of your ideal client and develops a strategy for communicating your services and capabilities to this target, not everyone. It requires defining the location, demographics, occupation, financials and other characteristics of clients who will give you the work you want. A business that tries to grow without a clear idea of where it wants to grow will soon find itself floundering.



*Attorney and
Law Firm
Guide to
The Business
of Law*

Do you want to:

- Be more successful by design than by accident?
- Be more profitable?
- Attract more clients?
- Have your clients pay on time?
- Have greater control of your practice?
- Have greater peace of mind?

If your answer is yes to any one of these questions, you must read this book. I have simplified the mystical process of operating a law practice so anyone can be more effective with his or her clients and become more profitable.

This expanded edition adds 27 new chapters on marketing, personnel issues, technology, time management, clients' trust accounting, opening a new office, and changing from one practice to another. As I say in my Preface to the Second Edition, "When we lawyers act in a more business-like manner, we tend to be more effective in the delivery of our services." The many ready-to-use forms and charts are available on a disk in Word Perfect, Excel, and Quattro Pro formats.

3) **Don't** be a bank for your clients. **Do** emphasize collections.

In today's economy, more than ever, law firms should not be banks that carry their client's expenses. Stipulating payment rates and terms in the engagement agreement and then enforcing them is the best way to get paid. If the client hasn't paid the fee while your firm continues to work on and bill for their matter, you are extending a no-cost loan to the client. Do not do this with a vague hope of being paid as expenses pile up. The engagement letter should clearly state the consequences to the client for failure to honor the agreed-upon payment terms. Keep track of when clients are behind on their payments, and be firm in requesting payment.

Take the first step in achieving a more successful practice—order today to get your own copy of the expanded *Second Edition of Attorney and Law Firm Guide to The Business of Law*[®] today!

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Personal Commentary

Happy holidays from the Poll household!



Nicole Fisher
PHOTOGRAPHY

Best wishes,

Ed Poll

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What Readers Are Saying...

"The Business of Law (2nd. ed., 2003) might be the most practical and informative book I have read in 10 years, honestly."

-Atty, Dallas, TX

"I have...assigned many of your articles and excerpts from your book to my students in Law Office Management. You are indeed the master."

-JB

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