

# The Top Ten Ways To Keep Your Negligence Clients Happy

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The following suggestions are offered to help you keep your negligence clients, be they plaintiffs, defendants, insurance carriers or referring attorneys happy. Following them may also help to improve results, encourage repeat business and prevent problems including malpractice or grievance claims.

## **1. Create Realistic Expectations**

It is always dangerous when you "guarantee" a certain outcome or result or present an unrealistic timetable for the completion of or reaching a certain stage of the matter.

## **2. Keep It Simple**

When you are writing to or discussing the case with your clients, convey the information they need to know but keep it in a simple, understandable manner. Be an "explainer" rather than a pontificator.

## **3. Gather the information you need**

To properly prepare your case you will often need documents, records, photographs or other information. Request your clients or other agencies to preserve and provide this information to avoid its destruction or unavailability.

## **4. Keep Your Costs and Disbursements Down**

Even if they will not come out of your pocket your clients appreciate it when you attempt to keep the expenses of litigation down. If you do not attempt to monitor costs (even if your client is not yet concerned about them) they may find some one who will. If your client is responsible for the expenses be sure it is clear who is going to advance them.

## **5. Reduce Wasted and Waiting Time**

Unfortunately attorneys have little control over the time they wait or waste in court. But when your clients are involved to sure that it is kept to a minimum so that are not waiting for you or for a proceeding to begin more than necessary. You can also keep them happy by scheduling appointments and discovery proceedings when it is most convenient for them and by consulting with them in advance as to their availability.

## **6. Follow-Up**

Whether it involves your clients, other parties, agencies or the courts keep your clients happy and help move your case along by following up for needed documents, information or to arrange discovery proceeding. You will also avoid being asked by the court or your clients, "why did you wait so long?"

## **7. Notice, Notice, Notice**

The failure to timely notify carriers of a claim (or lawsuit) can create insurmountable problems

for clients and their attorneys. Be sure to take every step possible to timely notify all potential parties and their carriers of possible claims (and lawsuits) to prevent these problems.

#### **8. Counsel your clients**

As part of your zealous representation of your clients be sure to also give them advice and perhaps options. Help them evaluate their exposure, recovery, costs and time involved and possible scenarios. Offer to further explore or evaluate these options with them. Find out what their concerns and goals are and help them to realize their expectations.

#### **9. Encourage Settlements**

Despite being a good lawyer in many cases there is a potential downside or worst case scenario for you clients. For these reasons after you help them to evaluate their goals, exposure or potential recovery it can help keep them happy to encourage settlement discussions. This can be done directly, thru the courts if they are so inclined, or with the help of a skilled mediator. The use of hi-lo arbitration can also help to prevent adverse results.

#### **10. Keep In Touch**

The most important way to keep your clients happy is to keep in touch. Whether they are plaintiff, defendant or carrier let them know the status of a matter, what will happen next and when it will occur. Let them know why nothing is happening or if there is any action they should take and or any actions you are taking to protect them. As part of keeping in touch be sure to respond to their letters and return telephone calls.