



How to Make Your Attorney

Look Good

By Paula Steffey, PP, CLP-SC, CWCP

Legal support professionals strive to do their best and make themselves look good to their attorney, but how can a legal support professional make their attorney look good? The answer to this question will vary depending on the type of law your attorney is practicing, but there are some simple things you can do that don't relate to any specific type of law.

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Knowing what your attorney needs before he/she needs it.

Attorneys don't always think ahead or they may not pay attention to little details. If you know your attorney has a meeting scheduled, then one way you can help is by putting together a packet of the pertinent information that he or she will need for the meeting. If they go into a meeting prepared, then chances are the meeting will be more productive and possibly take less time.

I once read that you may not be able to read your attorney's mind, but you can at least anticipate their needs.

Keep your files organized.

Yes, you should always keep your files in order, but that is not always realistic—especially if you are short staffed. One way to ensure your files are in order (when they need to be) is to look at your attorney's schedule for the next day, pull the appropriate files, and make sure everything is filed appropriately. You should also look to see if there is outstanding information that has been requested of opposing counsel, the client, or a third party. If there is, then simply make a note so your attorney knows what needs to be addressed. This is something I strive to do each day and I know my boss appreciates it. I actually do this in the morning so that way I have all day to pull things together if need be for the next day.

Keep your attorney on schedule.

This is very difficult some days, but it needs to be done. Many law offices have a messaging system where you can send them a reminder about 10-15 minutes before their appointment arrives or before they need to leave for court. You can also go into their office and put the file on their desk and let them know that their client is expected shortly. If you work in litigation and your attorney needs to be in court, you should have the file ready for them to grab and go so they won't be late because inevitably they will run behind some days. Of course, those are the days that there is likely to be a traffic jam or some other issue on the way to the courthouse so they will appreciate having the file in good order when they get to the courtroom.

Make their work look good.

You would not want to send something out with your name on it that is filled with typographical errors, incorrect data, or just plain looking sloppy so why do you want your boss to send out a letter or document that looks like a child prepared it. You definitely want to pay

attention to detail. I realize that time may be of the essence and you need to get something done quickly, but if you don't have time to do it right the first time, when are you going to find time to do it over. Just remember, if your boss looks good, then you look good.

Tell your attorney about mistakes before they find out.

Telling your attorney you made a mistake is difficult, but it is better for them to know ahead of time so they can be mindful of what has happened and take the appropriate steps to correct the issue.

Open communication with your attorney.

Open communication is essential to making your attorney look good. If you are transcribing a letter or document and something doesn't make sense to you, then chances are



it may not make sense to the client, opposing counsel, or whomever it is directed to. Don't be afraid to talk to your attorney. They don't have time to send a second or third letter clarifying what they wanted to say in the first place, and besides if they have to send a clarifying letter that means they have already wasted time reading a letter asking them to clarify what they thought they said in the first place.

Have complete copies of pertinent documents.

Having worked in many areas of the law, I have found there are some very easy ways to help keep your attorney organized and looking good. One way is making sure you have complete copies of pertinent documents and/or complete details before you start working on the file. It will make your life so much easier later and make your attorney look efficient. A couple of examples are below:

If your attorney handles landlord-tenant law, make sure you have a copy of the lease or rental agreement at issue. If it is for collection of past due rent, make sure you have a complete and accurate rental ledger.

If your attorney handles estate planning, make sure you have the full legal name, social security number, and date of birth of the client. You will need the names and birthdates of any children. You would also want to make sure you have the complete names and addresses of the proposed power of attorney, patient advocate, personal representative, or trustee.

If your attorney handles real estate matters and a client is selling their home, you would want to make sure you have a copy of the most recent recorded deed, legal description, and names and addresses of the buyers and sellers.

If your attorney handles workers' compensation matters, before an application for benefits could be filed you would need to know the name of the company where the person was injured, the date of injury, the names of any doctors who have treated them, and copies of any notices from the employer.

Basically, if you do not have the information you need when you start working on a file, there is always the chance that you will forget to "fill in the blanks" later and something will be missed.

As you can see there is no right or wrong way to make your attorney look good. If you were in their shoes, what would you want your assistant to do? Taking pride in what you do will go a long way to making your attorney look good. If you are not sure how to do something or are interested in finding a better way, don't forget that you can network with your very large NALS family and find a solution. Remember, we are #BetterTogether!



Paula Steffey, PP, CLP-SC, CWCP has been a member of NALS since 2014. She is currently the Certification Committee chair for NALS of Greater Kalamazoo in Michigan. She is also very active at the state level and is currently serving as the Certification Committee chair and Publications Committee chair for NALS of Michigan. At the national level she is on the Editorial + Marketing Board; Manuals Task Force; and S.A.G.E.S. Task Force. She also has a secondary membership with NALS of Phoenix. Outside of NALS she is a full-time legal assistant to attorney Garold A. Goidosik with Goidosik Morse Disability Law Group and has two other part-time jobs.

