

How to Communicate With Your Divorce Attorney,
Reduce Your Level of Stress,
And Actually Save Money

If the topic to this article hasn't already got your attention, let me try to reach out to you again. How many times have you heard a parent talk to a child, or a supervisor to an employee, "If I've told you once not to ___ I have told you a thousand times".

The problem is that if you have to tell somebody to do or not to do something a thousand times and they still haven't got the message, then you know what, you did not Effectively Communicate.

In that same regard, I have had clients tell me, "I called your office at least ten times and no body ever got back to me." How sad! Why would such a thing happen?

A typical day in a busy Family Law office goes like this for the Attorney:

8:00 a.m. – Arrive at the office and gather whatever files and papers are needed for Court.

8:25 a.m. – Leave the office to go to Court. Have the secretary call the Attorney in "Late to Court".

8:40 a.m. – Arrive in Court.

10:00 – 10:15 a.m. – Court Room Break.

This time is generally spent on the cell phone talking to the office, meeting with a client to explain what is happening with their case and finding a cup of coffee.

10:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Finish up in Court for the morning.

Clients select an Attorney because they have confidence in that individual. Many Family Law Attorney's work 60 plus hours per week. How does such a problem come about then? Consider the following:

12:00 – 1:30 p.m. – Return to the office, review and revise documents for afternoon Court and evening appointments, do online research regarding issues from Court that day, eat lunch and return to Court.

1:30 – 4:00 p.m. – Miscellaneous Court hearings, Settlement Conferences, Trials, Depositions etc.

4:00 – 8:00 p.m. – Office appointments.

WHERE IS THERE TIME FOR TELEPHONE CALLS?

When a client can't make contact via telephone after 1 or 2 times, the best opportunity to address your concern is to "Tap" into the Attorney's 4 – 8 p.m. time slots. For some reason many clients have an aversion to coming into the lawyers office for an actual appointment. Some of the reasons for the apprehension including the following:

- 1 – Its too much of an inconvenience
- 2 – My Attorney will charge me for the appointment
- 3 – I only need 5 minutes of my Attorney's time. I just have a single question

In response one might ask why would it ever be an "inconvenience" for a client to have a captive audience with his or her Attorney to discuss their case. I will address number 2 later herein.

I have actually tried to address concern number 3, - i.e.- the supposed 5 minute call. Here's what really happens:

Client – Hi, I'm glad I caught you in the office. I just have one question. Are we going to Court on my case next Tuesday?

Attorney – Unless somebody from my office told you otherwise, then we are scheduled to go to Court on your case next Tuesday.

Client – As long as I have you on the phone I'd like to ask you some more questions.

Attorney – I don't have your file in front of me, I'll have to get it to discuss your case.

Client – Ok, I'll wait.

Attorney – [Spoken only to himself] Great, I allotted 5 minutes for 1 question and have planned the rest of my evening around 5 minute call. Now I'm going to be here until 9 p.m. My family is going to love that.

Query to Client: Under the above scenario, you think you will get your Attorney's undivided attention for the next 15 minutes and get his best answer? How much do you think you will be charged for that 5 minutes, now 30 minute spur of the moment conference that your Attorney is probably not prepared for?

Generally speaking, when a client schedules a 6:30 p.m. office appointment and tells the staff the purpose of the meeting, the staff will have made sure that the file is in order and the Attorney has had an opportunity to be prepared for the appointment. In the course of a scheduled office appointment the Attorney will be looking for ways to come

up with a plan to help the client get through his or her matter and in the course of doing so will develop cost cutting strategies.

An Example: a client of mine recently scheduled a meeting to discuss the do's and don't's for a Settlement Conference the next day with her spouse. We discussed options and strategies for the Settlement Conference the next day. In that environment we discussed valuable settlement options that might otherwise have been glossed over in the 5 minute call. As an example, we discussed tax strategies regarding her support that potentially will save her in excess of \$120,000. We structured a secured payment plan that will guarantee her financial freedom over the next 6 ½ years. The cost you ask, \$150 for the appointment and \$300 for the meeting. The "5 Minute" phone call costs \$150.

The Results: Based on the scheduled client appointment the client will save \$120,000 in taxes, not to mention the virtual lack of stress she had knowing that we had developed an agenda for success at the Settlement Conference. For the "5 Minute" phone call, the only result was an increase in the stress level of the client and the Attorney plus a future level of stress when everyone realizes the "5 Minute" phone call was useless and expensive relative to the result.

So there you have it, you can make enemies with the staff, who work on your case, with a dozen phone calls; you can feel that your Attorney is not available to you or that you are being ignored. You will stress out and be charged for work that has not been given proper thought. Or, you can meet with your Attorney on a time schedule that you can live with and plan and plan and plan and achieve a great result.

The moral of this article, don't call your Attorney 10 times expecting a return call. Schedule a cost effective meeting where you can discuss the future of your case- i.e. your life- in an environment that is conducive to obtaining you objectives.