

CLIENT SATISFACTION (\$ WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS)

Dear Sezzers,

As a firm who wishes to provide a "Nordstrom" client experience, I just sent a bill with the following line item:

Client Satisfaction Adjustment (Please make any adjustment to bill as you see fit here).
. . . Amount of adjustment \$_____

Have any of you done this? I realize it is not for all areas of practice. Your thoughts are appreciated.

This is a fascinating question and we all will want to hear how it works for you. That adjustment could be up or down. A law firm here in Chicago for awhile (not sure if they still are doing it) made a satisfaction guarantee on all their work. Let us know the response.

Shell Bleiweiss, Illinois

Back in the day I did something similar in cases where I knew the client could not pay the fee, but could pay some, I discounted my statement so that the client would know there was a deduction. The problem I ran into was clients who learned of this policy might (and did) misrepresent wealth to induce often deep discounts. However, I never found that an accusing or truculent behavior made it any better. It also resulted in a client for whom I had organized a cojntruction corporation and wills when they were newly wed recent students, twenty years later when disability reduced practice and I moved my office to my basement at home, they reminded me of the past service to them and built basement office, wood with electric, wood paneled walls, drop ceiling and more. No money had ever changed hands as my service was styled a wedding present and years later it was gratis.

Good things can happen, just be sure kindness is shown on the statement so there is no devaluing of your work. Dick

Dick Howland, Massachusetts

For larger corporate clients, I would think that this approach has some merit, particularly if you're looking for repeat business from this corporate client. But if you're dealing with an individual or small business (where your primary contact is an entrepreneur who hasn't quite hit the big time just yet or who has but only did so by penny-pinching), I would just write off the entire billed amount. A lot of the latter clients have no idea what the value of legal services are. Most of them think that lawyers just create paperwork for the sake of creating paperwork.

What's the general approach though -- bill for every single second (ignoring inefficiency) and then just allow the client to discount the services and hope that it evens out to a fair amount in the end?

Arshil Kabani

Plus, this hasn't exactly been MY experience with Nordstrom. If you are seeking to provide a Nordstrom experience, why would you play set-your-own-price? Last time I bought at Nordstrom they treated me well, gave me good service, and then expected me to pay the full price on the tag.

Stephanie Hill

I do not like the idea. Presumably, you have a fee agreement with your client. If you did the work, you should receive the agreed fee, neither more nor less. To me, it looks like you are fishing for a "tip" or bonus, and that seems unprofessional.

If you want to provide exceptional service to clients, do so. If you want your clients' feedback about your service, ask them.

Steven Finell, California

I love the concept. Be the purple cow! :)

The Valorem Law Group does this:

<http://www.valoremlaw.com/what/value-line-adjustment.html>

And Matt Homann does everything (I think) on a "You Decide" fee:

<http://www.lexthinkllc.com>

I've thought a lot about offering a money back guarantee on my service. If clients aren't happy, I'd give their money back. Period. I'm too chicken to pull the trigger, though. I'm afraid I'd end up doing a lot of work for free (people who are unhappy with the judge's ruling and then blame me; thankfully most clients ARE happy). But maybe now the firm is steady enough to try something risky like that. I guarantee I'd be the only firm in town doing it.

Definitely let us know how your experiment goes.

Andrew

Andrew Flusche, Virginia
