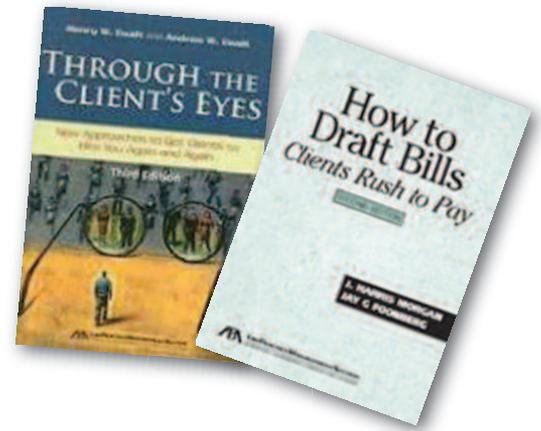


## Through the Client's Eyes: New Approaches to Getting Clients to Hire You Again and Again, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

Henry W. Ewalt, published 2008, 300 pages.

## How to Draft Bills Clients Rush to Pay, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

J. Harris Morgan & Jay G. Foonberg, published 2003, 136 pages.



Every time we shop, eat, travel or visit a web page, it seems the company we deal with wants to know how their service was and how they can do better. So why don't law firms ask this question more often?

Henry W. Ewalt's book *Through the Client's Eyes*, sets out to make the case from both a business perspective and in terms of lawyers' job satisfaction. His book demonstrates that by treating clients like people rather than cases, lawyers can develop more profitable (financially and personally) relations with clients.

Ewalt starts off with a look at the lawyer's traditional reluctance to consider "client service" techniques. Some think it isn't professional, some find soliciting the client's opinion a nuisance, and others just don't like criticism. These attitudes are damaging to a practice. The public expects a certain level of service quality, and if they don't think they are getting understanding from the lawyer and value for their money they will take their business elsewhere.

So how to develop a better bond with clients? As the book title says, look at everything you do through their eyes. When they come into your office for the first time, what do they see? A tidy office and professional, friendly staff make a great first impression. Learn as much as you can about the client, beyond just the matter at hand. The more you know the more services you can offer to them, their family, their business and their associates. Take the opportunity to educate them on what you are doing for them, so they can make informed decisions and be an active participant. Explain your fees and keep them informed as to the progress of their matter. Clients (like all of us) hate uncertainty: uncertainty of the legal system, the costs, and what the outcome will be.

Take the time to reassure them. It's not hand-holding; it's creating a bond of trust that will keep them bringing their business to you.

Other chapters look at how much a lawyer can be considered an 'entrepreneur', and incorporate successful ideas from the business world (e.g. technical innovations, alliance with other firms, outsourcing) to benefit the bottom line and the client experience. As well, most businesses today take steps to measure client satisfaction and ensure that all their staff are 'on board'. It should be no different at your firm. If your clients are corporations, you will find a chapter in this book that explains how to tailor your services to accommodate corporate cost controls and internal decision making processes.

So now that you have taken steps to keep your clients happy and coming to you with new business, you need to keep them paying you promptly! That is where *How to Draft Bills Client Rush to Pay* comes in. It is written by J. Harris Morgan and Jay G. Foonberg, two giants in the world of educating lawyers on law practice management.

All the advice in the book is based around two principles: Make sure the value of the work you have done for the client is clearly laid out in the bill, and don't surprise the client with the amount of the fee (unless it's a good surprise).

The authors give advice on how to come up with rates for all the staff and services in your office and in the following chapter tell you how to visually convey your efforts in the bill so clients will know exactly where the money is going. Several sample bills are provided.

Not surprising clients with the final bill means raising the issue of fees from the

very first meeting and having a fee agreement. Then keep the client informed of expenses on an ongoing basis and make them aware of anything that may change your initial estimate of the cost of handling the matter. Bill them promptly. Clients will be happy to pay bills that tell them they have received good value for their money and have come in at an amount they have expected.

The book wraps up with a look at alternative billing arrangements such as flat fees and contingency fees. It is the authors' opinion that while there is a growing push to get away from the time-based fees toward new and different types of billing arrangements, the billable hour is deeply entrenched in firms and law school teaching and is not going away.

At a time when firms may be feeling financial pressures from the economic downturn, keeping clients both happy and paying their bills promptly is more important than ever. These books provide easy-to-implement ideas and a lot of food for thought for firms looking to become more client focused.

You can borrow both these books for free from the practicePRO Lending library ([www.practicepro.ca/library](http://www.practicepro.ca/library)). Full tables of contents for both books are available online.

If you wish to purchase your own copy, *Through the Client's Eyes* costs \$89.95 and *Drafting Bills Clients Rush to Pay* costs \$67.95. For more information on these and other excellent ABA LPM section publications, go to [www.abanet.org/catalog](http://www.abanet.org/catalog).

*Tim Lemieux is practicePRO coordinator with LAWPRO. He can be reached at [tim.lemieux@lawpro.ca](mailto:tim.lemieux@lawpro.ca).*