

Deepening the Attorney-Client Bond

BY JILL ROTHSTEIN

As we move into the heart of February, the initial surge of New Year's resolutions has often cooled, replaced by the steady, demanding rhythm of the billable hour and the complex realities of the 2026 legal landscape. While the "honeymoon phase" of new year goals may have faded, a core challenge of our profession remains: bridging the gap between complex legal strategy and clients' human needs.

The challenges of practicing today are no longer just about the law; they are about managing the intersections of law, technology, and humanity. With an ever-increasing pressure for 24/7 responsiveness, the "always-on" culture has become a primary hurdle.

Tools have become faster, and client expectations have followed suit. Clients today seek transparency, require efficiency, and demand practitioners who are not just skilled in the work but also recognize that the client is more than just a case file.

Providing that level of service requires a supportive professional foundation. February, with its shorter days and heavy workloads, is a perfect time to let the State Bar of Wisconsin serve you and your practice. Take a moment to consider one of the suggestions below.

Procedural and Strategic Transparency. Clients may feel disconnected when the legal process is a "black box." Use this month to audit your matter-management communication. Instead of simply providing outcomes, consider whether your clients might benefit from a procedural roadmap. When a client understands the *why* behind a discovery delay or a filing timeline, their trust in you increases, transforming a transactional relationship into a collaborative one.

The "Non-Billable" Value Audit. Connection is strengthened when a client knows you are thinking about their interests outside of a specific task. Take time to send a brief, relevant legal update – a recent court ruling or a regulatory change – that impacts their specific industry or situation. This demonstrates your abilities as a proactive advocate, signaling that you are a steward of their long-term interests.

Alignment in Expectation Management. The most frequent source of friction in the attorney-client relationship is the misalignment of expectations regarding "success." Use a mid-winter check-in to recalibrate.

Using February as a time to consider and refine your professional touchpoints can lead to a more rigorous and resilient practice.

As you refine these connections with your clients, remember that the State Bar is doing the same for you. We are committed to providing the resources that keep your practice – and your professional well-being – on track. I look forward to our continued work together this year. **WL**



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