

The customer's perception is your reality. ~ Kate Zabriskie

Getting the best service

We would like to make sure that you get the best possible service from our team, and so we have come up with a few suggestions of how to ensure that this is always the case.

Discuss with your lawyer their office hours and working hours

Because of Panama's traffic, our lawyers have different working hours depending on which part of town they live and commute from - for example, 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with a half hour lunch; 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. with a half hour for lunch. If your lawyer gets into the office every morning at 6:30 a.m., please don't expect them to be taking your call at 5:00 p.m. Yes, our office is still open, but if they are still in the office, it's because they stayed to catch up on paperwork that they didn't get done during the day. They appreciate the quiet time.

Respect our "working hours"

When we start the relationship, make sure you know when we are available for phone calls, meetings and to answer your emails. (We will have questions for you too, to find out what's the best way to contact you, what hours are best, and how you prefer to handle communications). As lawyers, we juggle meeting with clients, responding to calls/emails and actually getting the work done. Sometimes that work is drafting contracts and documents, during which time we are interruption-adverse. For most of us, that means that we aren't available before 9:00 a.m. or after a certain time in the afternoon, as those are our "most productive" hours for getting the work done.

Make an appointment

Rather than simply dropping in to our office and hoping that we will be available. Some days, dropping in is perfect and we aren't in another meeting or trying to meet a deadline, but even lawyers have bad days. We would prefer to make a good impression on you - showing you our best side, which means that we have your file and papers on hand and are available to answer your questions - rather than rushing off to the next appointment.

Communication & Responsiveness

We strive to return all phone calls on the day received or by the following morning, if received late in the day. Our office number has a voice message system on which confidential, detailed messages can be left. Where appropriate, you will be provided by mobile phone numbers of the lawyer working with you. The names of other staff members can also be provided.

Communication by email is now common, although it may be subject to unauthorised interception (as are mobile phone communications). We will consider ourselves authorised to communicate with you by email or mobile phones, where available, unless you instruct us otherwise. Some of our clients use social media for a variety of purposes. Any communications by social media are expressly not to be considered legal advice.

Come prepared to your appointment

A list of questions, a bullet list of items you need to discuss, or a short sketch of the objectives you have for the meeting. This works best when you let us know in advance what is on the list (it may be that we need to involve another lawyer in the meeting, as the questions pertain to someone else's area of expertise. Having this short agenda also helps us keep the meeting moving forward, without getting overly sidetracked (please remember we do charge by the hour for the meeting, and we'd like you to leave feeling that you got value for money, rather than speaking with a taxi-meter). If you are coming for your first visit, and you aren't sure what questions you should be asking, you might have a look at suggested questions on the page "Questions to ask your Lawyer"

Clarify your Expectations

Be clear with us about what you want to happen, what you need us to do for you, and the time frames in which we can make these things happen - ask us to confirm this in writing if you are not sure how long a process is going to take. We may have to educate you regarding time frames in Panama, but we will do everything possible to work within the timeframes that you expect.

Quotes & Letters of Engagement

Ask us for a quote and/or Letter of Engagement. Understanding the cost implementations of any instructions you give to us is essential to ensure that you receive value for money. If you have difficulty taking notes during a meeting or on a phone call, please ask us to send you a list of the agreed upon "action items" from the call, including any relevant costs and deadlines that we agreed to. That way we can always make sure that there were no misunderstandings

Do your part

When we provide you with a list of documents that we need, please bring ALL items on the list. We try to make sure that the list provided is comprehensive, so that we don't waste a client's time going back and forth asking for documents on a piecemeal basis. We do ask that clients do the same for us, and provide us complete documentation. If you have a problem obtaining a particular document, or you simply don't have it, then let us know in advance, to see if we can come up with a solution. This also means that you should gather the information before its absence generates a crisis. Sometimes our office staff can help with preparing the documents. BUT, remember, our time is valuable, and as a result the bill will be higher. If you ask us to help with the preparation of documents, please bear this in mind when you are presented with the bill.

Educate yourself about Panama

You've probably hired us to "run interference" with a Government office that possibly doesn't run as smoothly as you are used to in your home country. It's true that you are in a foreign land, and many things may not make sense to you. Additionally, you may have a communication barrier because of the language - but the better educated you are about your own situation, the easier you make it for us. You may find that internet chat sites and other people's experience can provide you with valuable information. If you're on Facebook, you might find the **Expats in Panama** a good place to start, although there are many other groups also available. We are multitasking continually... this means that we may be juggling things for 10 different clients in one day, and your paperwork is being worked on in the order it arrived. There are times, also, when we are waiting for paperwork to arrive back that was submitted to a government department, and without having those particular papers back, we can't move on to the next stage

Keep your Contact Information current

You should keep us informed as to your current mailing address, physical address, and phone numbers (as well as email address if that is used). We will rely upon the last contact information you provide to us. You agree that we can do so with respect to any need we may have to communicate with you (during the existence of the lawyer-client relationship or after conclusion of that relationship) relating in any way to our representation of the Client, including in connection with commencing any dispute resolution as described above.

Pay the bill in 21 days or less

Please review your bill promptly upon receipt; the billing will be deemed approved and the fees earned five (5) business days after the statement or invoice has been emailed to you the first time. We will send you weekly reminders thereafter regarding the bill, for you to pay within two weeks. We don't want to call you to ask you to pay the invoice we emailed to you and then sent to you in the mail. But if we haven't received your payment within the first 20 days, we will start calling to follow up (and we feel terrible about doing it). If you're not happy with the bill, then let us know why. Communication is key in our professional relationship with clients, and we can't provide explanations to questions which aren't asked.