

WAYS TO SAVE MONEY WITH LAWYERS (APART FROM SETTING THE DOGS ON THEM)



BUCHANAN LAW
Intellectual Property and Technology

www.buchananlaw.com.au

Office Buchanan Law
IP & Technology Pty Ltd
Level 3,
54 Marcus Clarke Street,
Canberra ACT 2601

Postal GPO Box 579,
Canberra ACT 2601

Tel 02 6162 1639

Fax 02 6162 3202

Email info@buchananlaw.com.au

ACN 136 866 067

When you instruct a lawyer, what are you *really* paying for (apart from his or her mortgage, car payments, office rental, insurance premium, etc.)? No, it's not a trick question. We promise.

Basically, the answer is his or her time. And why is that significant? Well, once you work out ways of saving your lawyer's time when they are acting in your matters, you are well on your way towards saving yourself a not inconsiderable sum of money. Beneath, we set out what we regard as seven key ways of saving time when dealing with a law firm:

- ***As much as possible before instructing, try to work out what it is you want the firm to achieve for you.*** Now that sounds pretty darned obvious but what we mean is this: from your *commercial* perspective, what outcome do you really want? For example, if you wanted us to draft terms and conditions for use of your website, would you want something that is long, with the emphasis on complete coverage of all the issues, or short, with the emphasis on convenience? If you want to take action against somebody, what is your commercial bottom line on what you are willing to spend (not just directly in terms of our invoices but also in terms of your time and human resources) and what you want from the other side?
- ***The more detail you give up front, the less the firm needs to come back to you.*** The reality is if you front load all your instructions, both in terms of what you want done and giving out all the background information/documentation, it means that (a) there are not so many requests for further instructions and (b) it makes drafting appropriate responses simpler and quicker. More importantly, experience tells us the increases in time (and so, frequently, cost) if you *don't* front load are not just straight-line increases but will actually grow exponentially.

- ***If you want to discuss costs, don't be afraid to ask.*** Even if it's as simple as saying "What can you do for \$[X] in relation to [the matter]?" then most law firms will (or should) be willing to discuss various combinations of cost/time/work options with you to make sure that you get maximum value for your spend. So, if you don't like your quote or an estimate, you can either contact the firm to discuss those option combinations or, if you prefer, shop around. Remember, though, that if you decide to price compare, always make sure that you are comparing like for like on the level of service and scope of services involved.
- ***Work towards a clear and realistic timetable for everybody concerned.*** We are the first to admit that there are times in life when, of course, things are urgent and need to be done as soon as possible; we like this kind of challenge. However, wherever possible, if you can give clear lead time in a matter, the extra time may lead to a better overall *strategic* picture both for you and your advisers.
- ***If you don't understand what you are being told, don't be afraid to ask for an explanation.*** Lawyers today will try to avoid jargon but sometimes, even so, things can get pretty technical. If you are not sure of what you are being told, whether in writing or in conversation, just ask; again, it will save time later on.
- ***Don't be afraid/concerned/embarrassed to show/tell all relevant information/documents/materials.*** Remember, your lawyers are bound by professional obligations of confidentiality and law firms typically impose similar obligations on their employees by contract. Even if you are not yet a client, your matters should be treated with the utmost secrecy.
- ***If you have a legal issue, don't put off giving those initial instructions.*** Being on the wrong end of a legal problem is never fun but, as with many issues (e.g. health), the longer you leave it, the more it takes to fix it and so, even if you don't decide to instruct us, do make sure you get somebody to deal with the matter for you.

There we go. Easy. And if, after successfully applying all those tips, you still think lawyers are expensive, then ask yourself what your lawyers' take home might be once he or she has covered all the office and professional overheads? <sounds of muffled weeping and violins, etc.>

So, then, why are we telling you all this? Where's the catch? No catch. We just like to be different to those other firms who will basically try to scare you with tales of the terrible things that can go wrong if you don't use them. We won't even be offended if you want to use a firm other than ours (just as long as you promise not to look at price alone: value for money does not always mean cheapest).

With All Best Wishes,

The BL Team