

TURBOCHARGE YOUR WORKFLOW

If every file on your desk is on fire and it feels like your practice is approaching meltdown, how do you know where to start to put the fires out? Here are some ways to help:

1. Start by making a single TO DO list containing everything you can think of that needs to be done. Don't try to organize tasks or prioritize them. Just list them.
2. Once you have made your comprehensive list, divide it into two lists – one for yourself and one for your secretary or legal assistant. Your list should contain only things that you (a lawyer) can do. Everything else should be on the other list for your secretary or legal assistant. If either list looks humanly impossible, you probably need more help.
3. Go over these two lists again and divide each into two more lists: one **high priority list** for the things that must be done today and a second one for **everything else**. Revise the lists each afternoon before you leave or each morning as soon as you arrive at the office. Let the priority list guide your work during the day, but use the second list to add less pressing tasks as they come up. This approach will keep you focused on what's most important, because you won't have to worry about forgetting something else. It's all on the list.
4. Once you've prioritized your TO DO lists, let your calendar help you manage your time. In addition to noting the final due date of important events such as statutes of limitations, filing deadlines, and hearing and trial dates, calendar at least three advance reminders of the event. Calendar a follow-up reminder for monitoring each event.
5. Schedule appointments with your files on a specific day, at a specific time, and for a specific length of time to ensure that you make time to do the work. If you take these appointments with your client files as seriously as you take an appointment with the client, you are much less likely to allow yourself to be interrupted while you are doing the work. If you set up two of these work appointments, with sufficient blocks of time to actually do the work, you're much more likely to complete it on time and without stress, even if it turns out to be more complicated than you originally anticipated. Scheduling appropriate blocks of time on the calendar to do work gives you a much better idea of how busy you really are, and scheduling two sessions for doing the work also helps you to avoid those seemingly inevitable time crunches caused by unexpected emergencies for other clients.

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