

Client Communications

Effective communication with clients is essential for successful legal relationships. Providing accurate, informative and helpful advice leads to positive outcomes for both solicitor and client.

From my experience during seats in Commercial Property, Private Client and Litigation, I have seen how different styles of communication may be needed to suit different clients. One common theme was the importance of thorough preparation.

It is essential to read through any papers before attending a meeting, and try to anticipate what questions the client might have. I found during my time in our Private Client department, when attending executry meetings, it was always beneficial to consider a client's concerns and anticipate what they might ask, eg queries about tax implications. Even if you don't know the answers to any questions, identifying those in advance might mean you are able to suggest a colleague who can help.

Remember: a meeting is also your opportunity to ask the client questions and get any more information from them – so note any information you might need in advance. You don't want to have to go back after a meeting to check on details which could have been confirmed then – even basic things like an email address or contact phone number.

Explaining information in a clear and coherent manner allows the client to understand the legal and commercial issues facing them and makes the client feel confident in your ability to achieve the desired outcome for them.

As a trainee, you will more often than not be asked to set out advice in writing. When drafting advice letters, reports or emails try to think about who will read it, and what they need to know. Clients do not generally want or expect a legal essay: they want to know how the law affects them and their situation. Ask colleagues in the office who deal with those clients how they like to have things presented. When you are drafting ask yourself "so what?" to test out whether you have actually answered the questions which the client has asked.

Gaining experience in client or customer facing roles is beneficial when it comes to making applications and attending interviews. This could be through volunteering at the Citizens Advice Bureau or through a part-time job. The skills required in effective client communication, such as accuracy and attention to detail, are certainly relevant to applying for a traineeship. Building and developing these skills at an early stage will assist you in your legal career.

To find out more about our training opportunities please contact
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