

Popular Threads on Solosez

PERFECT WORDING FOR "YOU HAVEN'T PAID YOUR BILL" CALLS

Hi, all. I am sitting down today to call the two clients I have who have not paid their bills (I usually only take cases with a retainer up front, but these I took during my first month of practice, when I was less discriminating). What, exactly, do I say to them? I have been an attorney for 22 years, but never had to handle my own billing, so this is a new skill. I would like to be polite, direct, and effective.

Be friendly, but firm.

Be direct.

Get a commitment to pay AND a schedule for payments.

"Hi, John. Listen, I'm calling because your payment on my last bill is _ months overdue. I've got my own bills to pay, so how soon can I expect your payment?"

Also, do not automatically accept time payments. If they offer, say you don't lend \$ and suggest that the client borrow the money from family/friends. If they respond that family/friends won't lend them the money, then respond "If they won't, why should I?"

Good luck.

Russ Carmichael

If you don't already, you should accept credit/debit cards. Law Charge is run by our own Tracy Griffin - www.LawCharge.com

We've discussed ad infinitum whether or not you should use PayPal - I only use it for one client and it is only for fees already earned or fees payable to the USPTO. It *might* be acceptable in this case presuming that these are fees already earned and not to replenish a retainer.

Laura McFarland-Taylor

Hi, I was just going through my files and I note that you file is more than 30 days in arrears on the bill. What are your plans with regard to this. By the way, how bout those Astros? Honestly, every client is different but start with a line or two of small talk then go direct and it'll get their attention. They are at least as embarrassed as you are.

Stephen L. Hoffman, Illinois

And if push comes to shove you can always drag out the old short form Promissory Note -- every firm I've worked with has one and it's slightly intimidating, if nothing else.

Friendly but firm is what I've usually ended up doing --- and I've had to collect on behalf of a lot of attorneys. Watch out for the post-dated check thing --- they can close an account pretty easily and leave you holding the bag.

Karalyn Eckerle

Virtual Assistant/Paralegal

After you tell them the bill is past due: "It's so unlike you to leave a matter like this hanging, I wanted to call and make sure everything is OK" and "is there something I need to do on my end to make the billing process more convenient for you?" It gives you an opportunity to remove whatever perceived roadblocks they want to use as their excuse.

Rustin Polk, Texas

Ooh, good one Rustin.

I also like the line "When will you be sending the payment?" tacked on. Then wait, don't say anything. (Resist the urge to fill the vacuum.) Let them hem, haw and be uncomfortable. Make them come up with the commitment.

Nancy Duhon, Georgia

I like reality tv star Jesse James' method: get the words "Pay Up Sucka" tattooed on your palm.

Shawn M. French, South Carolina

I find it very useful to just call, ask if there is a problem with the bill or my services. 90+% of the time they will apologize and send me \$. the other 10% of the time I get to dump a non paying client. a win win!

Randy B. Birch, Utah