

Do You Follow Up On No-Shows?

I am deciding whether I should waste energy and/or postage on my no-shows. I would appreciate your thoughts/experiences. The only reason I see it benefiting me is that if the person did not come to their appointment, they may come in the future or refer others to me.

I don't think I'd waste postage but I've followed up with my share of no-shows, many of whom have hired me. I will generally call 10 minutes after the appointment time to see what's going on. If they answer and want to reschedule I will oblige but be clear that in the future they need to let me know when something comes up. If there's no answer I'll leave a message asking them to call and reschedule (and follow up via email). If I don't hear back in a week I'll try to make contact one more time to reschedule and then drop it.

Ryan Phillips

I have my secretary call them, 10 or 15 mins. after the scheduled appointment start time. Often they had the wrong time or day on the calendar or just forgot. It's easy to rebook and salvage the situation. And it prevents them showing up some other day or time thinking they had an appointment and being upset at the mixup. Now, if someone does it 2 or 3 times, or doesn't answer when we call and doesn't get back to us if we leave a message, we usually just let it go.

Sincerely yours,
Michael D. Caccavo, Vermont

Because I require payment in advance of scheduling a consult, I don't have no-shows. I have callers who object to paying in advance, and are willing to bring a check to the meeting but, gee, just two days ago, I got notice of stop payment on a check sent in advance of the consult.

C.J. Stevens, Montana

No matter where they go, no matter how well they hide, i find them all..... and demand answers!

Tom Crane, Texas

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Yes. In one instance, my client didn't show to revise his estate plan because he died suddenly the morning he'd planned on visiting me! He was in his early 40s. I ended up speaking with family members, handling his estate and nearly 15 years later, still helping his kids out from time to time with legal issues. Another client had a fatal car accident on the morning he planned to see me. Again, his family was grateful I called and I still help other family members from time to time. I genuinely liked the clients and am grateful I had the opportunity to be there when the family needed me. The reality is that in each of these cases, the families didn't know that the client had an appointment to see me and they were grateful that I cared about their loved one enough to call.

Other clients occasionally forgot appointments or had the dates wrong. I have very few no shows, primarily because I try to get people in within a few days of their initial call if at all possible. But in general, I think the calls let them know that I care, my staff cares and things happen. I try to treat people the way I'd like to be treated and I'd appreciate a phone call if I'm late or if I miss an appointment.

Vicki Levy Eskin, Florida

No-shows happen all the time in bankruptcy and consumer cases. Many times this is because the client couldn't get a ride, the bus was late, they needed to work at the last minute, etc. etc.. This is pretty typical for someone struggling financially.

Unless they've blown me off previously, I call them and ask whether they want to reschedule. Sometimes they've already found another attorney, in which case they go in my "inactive/rejected/closed" folder.

Calling them is a great way for them to not lose face.

I've also stopped having Monday morning appointments, because they are the most likely to genuinely forget about the appointment and a reminder on Friday isn't usually fresh in their minds.

Good luck!

Corrine Bielejeski, California

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I was a no-show recently, I had the appointment firmly scheduled on the day after the correct date. I was mortified. They were very gracious, for which I was enormously grateful. I wish they'd have called me on the correct date, I could have made it.

I like all the advice- especially the preventative. CJ's method of charging is a good one! If you get a lot of them, then use a reminder process. Call or email them. If you still get a lot of them, then take a look at your qualification process- maybe you need to beef up the conversation before you book the appointment. Keep track and you'll start having information that you can use to see where to make changes. It should be a very low percentage.

Good luck!

Barbara Nelson
Notta Lawyer, New Jersey

I go knock on their door if they don't show. If nobody answers I leave a nice note and a business card and sometimes a cookie.

Marilou, a nonlawyer who stops at nothing to get her man

Have done it in the past and still do it occasionally if we are really slow.

Have consistently found that it is just an exercise in wasted time, wasted energy and frustration. We have often found that when we get hold of no shows they just make up an excuse, agree to schedule another appointment, and don't show up for that one either.

Ken Forman, Florida

I also find it a waste of time following up. My follow up call consistently, 100% of the time, goes to voice mail and I never hear from them again.

Ellen Victor, New York

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I might call or maybe email (where I tell them "govern yourself accordingly") but that's it. So far i**ve resisted the urge to send Guido out to hunt them down like the dogs they are.

John Davidson, Pennsylvania

I tried following up one time. Had my secretary call them with a story about doing a survey. I believe she only spoke with a couple of no-shows. They had some reason about their situation had changed and they just chose not to show up.

Tom Crane

Very generally, no, I don't follow up on no shows; unless I've done actual work for them and they don't show up (i.e. drafted a will and they didn't make the signing). Occasionally, people will forget, or have a flat tire, or whatever; if they contact me with a half decent reason I'll reschedule; but sometimes people are just flakes; and I don't necessarily want referrals from flakes.

Ron Jones, Florida

You should check the papers they may have died. It took a call from another client before the victim of the murder with the really big headline was PM appointment.

John Davidson

Oh, well, yeah, I do check the obits. I like to see if I'm getting any probates. I recognize my clients names.

Ron Jones
