5 tips for creating bulletproof time entries

One of the time-tested ways in which clients dispute bills is by taking issue with specific time entries and arguing that they should not have to pay for any number of reasons: the entry was vague; not reflecting legal skills; redundant; contradictory to other time entries; incomplete, and so on. Because your billable hours are undoubtedly the major part of your bill, you want to create time entries that will be "bulletproof" and stand up to client scrutiny. Here are a few tips to help you accomplish that.

Input Your Time Immediately

The longer the time between when you complete a task and when you input it, the harder it will be for you to be specific and thorough in your entry. By inputting your time immediately (made easier when you have [the ability to do so from any device at any time](#)), the information will be fresh in your mind and thus you can create a comprehensive entry.

Create Time Entries that Reflect Your Unique Work...

If you and a fellow attorney attended a witness prep, and your job was to conduct a mock cross-examination of the witness while the other attorney listened to the answers and concurrently searched for documents to use in the mock cross-examination, then create time entries for each attorney which reflect these unique tasks. Otherwise, if a client sees two timekeepers both input entries reading simply "Attend witness prep," they may argue the work was redundant.

…But Make Sure Entries Are Consistent When Called For

That said, if two attorneys attended the same strategy meeting, and yet their time entries reflected completely different summaries of what was discussed, the client might argue that at least one of the entries was inaccurate and even argue the whole bill is suspect. Thus, make sure your time entries are consistent with one another regarding the nature of shared tasks.

Let Your Entries Reflect Your Legal Skill

It's up to you to create billing entries that justify your billing rate, so make sure that each entry includes sufficient detail to not only indicate: 1) why a lawyer and not an administrative employee was required to complete the task; but also 2) why a lawyer of your experience (and thus billing rate) was required to complete the task and not a more junior attorney.

Bill for Each Task Separately

Lawyers love "block billing" but clients (for the most part it) cringe at it, both for their internal accounting purposes and for the alleged room for ambiguity and abuse. But with automated billing services, creating individual entries to reflect each task is easy.

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