



Law Office Self-Audit Checklist

This document is to serve as a self-evaluation tool for the small law office and/or solo practitioner. It will assist in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of management practices. It will promote concentration on areas needing improvement and hopefully provides a fresh look at how to enhance the operation and management of your practice.

CLIENT RELATIONS

	YES	NO	NA
During the initial client meeting, do we establish clear communication by asking the clients how they want to be kept informed?			
Do we communicate the client's preferences to the team members and put a notation in the client's file?			
Do we introduce all team members (not just attorneys) to the client?			
Do we discuss budgets, fees, and billing procedures during the initial client meeting to avoid surprises?			
Do we provide clients with written fee agreements and letters of representation?			
For contingent fee matters, do we provide clients with written contingent fee agreements which state the method by which the fee is to be determined, including the percentage or percentages that shall accrue to the lawyer in the event of settlement, trial, or appeal, litigation and other expenses to be deducted from the recovery, and whether such expenses are to be deducted before or after the contingent fee is calculated? See R. Regulating Fla. Bar 4-1.5(f).			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the firm retain copies of written fee contracts and closing statements in contingency fee matters for 6 years after execution of the closing statement as required by Rule 4-1.5(f)(5)? 			
Do we return clients' phone calls and emails within 24 hours?			
Do we send follow-up letters after a meeting or telephone conversation in which new decisions have been reached?			
Do we have a schedule to follow up with clients whose cases are inactive?			
Do we ask the client for feedback as the matter moves along?			
Do we complete all the work, which we told the client we would complete, in a timely fashion?			
Do we send a file closing letter at the conclusion of each matter?			



CONFLICT OF INTEREST

	YES	NO	NA
Do we maintain and continuously update a master conflict database that includes the names and contact information of current and former clients, officers and directors, adverse parties, employees, counsel, and other individuals with cross references to files to facilitate the identification of potential conflicts of interest?			
Do we check our master conflict database for potential conflicts <i>prior</i> to accepting a new client or matter?			
Do we have a system in place to clear potential conflicts before proceeding with the client intake?			
Do we get a signed waiver from the client if representation is requested after a potential conflict has been discussed?			
Do we have procedures in place to decline representation?			

DOCKET/CALENDARING

	YES	NO	NA
Do we maintain a master firm calendar?			
Do we keep individual calendars, i.e., attorney and secretary/paralegal?			
Do all calendars include the following (as applicable)?:			
• Statutes of limitations?			
• All court appearances?			
• Client and other appointments?			
• Hearings?			
• Regulatory deadlines?			
• Litigation deadlines?			
• Internal self-imposed deadlines?			
Do we have systems in place for updating and maintaining each calendar in case of scheduling changes?			
Do we assign calendar entries to the designated team member?			
Do we use reminders or other tickler system to draw the attorney's (and team's) attention to an upcoming deadline?			
Does the team coordinate regularly to review deadlines and ensure an efficient workflow?			



RECORDS MANAGEMENT

	YES	NO	NA
Do we have a standardized filing system for all client files?			
Is all staff informed of the reasons for and methods of filing procedures?			
For paper files, do we store records in a secure environment safe from water or vermin damage?			
Do we have controls in place, so team members can access only those files for which they have been granted access to?			
Are all materials filed timely and regularly (i.e., not piling up on your desk or floor)?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If maintaining paper files, are all documents filed away in the appropriate client/matter file? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If maintaining digital files, are all documents promptly scanned and filed in the appropriate client/matter file? 			
For cloud-based document management systems, are client files encrypted?			
Do we follow a file status schedule after a case is completed (i.e., when to close, when to review for destruction, what to return to client, what to keep and for how long)?			
Do we maintain backups?			

STAFF MANAGEMENT

	YES	NO	NA
Do we clearly communicate expectations of performance to all firm employees?			
Do we have a current office policy and procedures manual?			
Do we provide regular training for our employees?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we train employees in the ethical requirements of working in a law office environment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When first hired, do we request that employees review and execute an employee confidentiality agreement? ○ Do we ask employees to read Chapter 4 of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar, The Rules of Professional Conduct? 			
Do we offer staff continuing education opportunities?			
Do we properly supervise employees by reviewing their work?			
Do we promote a culture of compliance by creating, implementing, and monitoring dependable office policies and procedures?			
Do we provide regular, honest, and thorough employee evaluations?			



	YES	NO	NA
Do we provide informal feedback to encourage and motivate employees?			
Do we provide a “safe” office environment? This refers to both the physical space, as well as the office culture.			

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

	YES	NO	NA
TIMEKEEPING			
Do we have documented timekeeping procedures?			
Do we communicate firm goals to timekeepers?			
Do we train all timekeepers in proper timekeeping methods?			
Is time recorded at the time the work is performed?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If not, is it recorded within a reasonable time after having been performed (i.e., the end of the day)? 			
Do we use time and billing software?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If so, does the software meet our timekeeping needs? 			
Do we provide feedback to timekeepers regarding their timekeeping skills?			
BILLING			
Is all timekeepers’ time posted to clients’ files daily?			
Are all expense disbursements posted to clients’ files regularly?			
Are all internally incurred expenses (postage, etc.) posted to clients’ files regularly?			
Are all payments and credits posted to clients’ files regularly?			
Are all entries reviewed for accuracy?			
Are all bills reviewed and approved by management?			
Are bills sent out on a regularly scheduled basis?			
Are the accounts receivable evaluated and followed up on regularly?			
TRUST PROPERTY AND TRUST ACCOUNTS			
Are we in compliance with Chapter 5 of The Rules Regulating The Florida Bar, Rules Regulating Trust Accounts?			



	YES	NO	NA
Are unearned client funds being handled in accordance with Chapter 5 of The Rules Regulating The Florida Bar, Rules Regulating Trust Accounts?			
Are we performing monthly reconciliations as required by Rule 5-1.2?			
Do we maintain copies of the front and back of cancelled checks as required by Rule 5-1.2(b)(3)?			
If we have more than one attorney in the firm, do we have a trust account plan as required by Rule 5-1.2(c)(1)?			
Are all trust accounting records retained for a period of 6 years subsequent to the final conclusion of each representation in which trust funds or property were received as required by Rule 5-1.2(f)?			

TECHNOLOGY

	YES	NO	NA
Do all our lawyers and staff use computers?			
Do we have antivirus software that regularly scans computer systems and files?			
Do we use a networked computer system that allows all users access to appropriate documents and information?			
Is everyone trained to fully utilize the firm's various software programs?			
Do we have an e-mail policy?			
Do we use case management software?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If so, does it include a secure client communications portal? 			
Are we familiar with the Quick Start Guide on Cloud Computing developed by The Florida Bar's Standing Committee on Technology?			
Have we conducted due diligence of cloud service providers as required by Florida Bar Ethics Opinions 06-1 and 12-3?			
Do we securely store passwords?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we use a password manager (i.e., LastPass, 1Password, Dashlane, etc.)? 			
Do we ensure confidentiality of all information, including metadata, when sending electronic documents as required by Florida Bar Ethics Opinion 06-2?			