

WORKING WITH YOUR ASSISTANT: “HELP ME HELP YOU!”

Presented by:

Dee-Anne Kuyten

Jolène Davies

ACTLA

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INTRODUCTION

- Getting the most out of your lawyer.
- Helping your lawyer get the most out of you.
- Tricks and traps from an Assistant's perspective.

TRICKS

(FOR GETTING LAWYERS TO FOLLOW GOOD HABITS)

Reminder Systems:

- Gentle reminders (followed by nagging when necessary) to avoid lawyers hoarding files, procrastinating or failing to respond as necessary in a timely manner.
- Pulling a certain number of files per day or per week for the lawyer's review and making sure that they do review them...(see above re: nagging).
- Keeping up to date "to do" lists and schedules of upcoming Questionings, ADRs, court hearings, etc. that are easily accessible to the lawyer.

Communication:

- Push for clear instructions (preferably typed or dictated illegibility of lawyer's handwriting).
- Managing expectations regarding workload and deadlines.
- Voice ideas to improve efficiencies to free up both your time and theirs for more pressing matters.

TRICKS

(FOR GETTING LAWYERS TO FOLLOW GOOD HABITS)

Organization:

- Keep files organized and up to date. Filing sucks but it will save time looking for documents, correspondence etc. at the last minute.
- Again, communicate about how best to organize files, correspondence, etc.
- If a system for organization isn't working, look for another system.

When all else fails:

- Make bets to keep up motivation.



TOP TEN

MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO

1. Leaving things to the last minute
2. Drowning us with a ton of work all at once, all with urgent deadlines (think 3 hour dictation).
3. Confusing us with their chauffeur, personal assistant, office cleaner, caterer, etc.
4. Responding to an x or y question with a simple yes or no, requiring us to follow up with “yes to x or to y”.
5. Not responding at all.
6. Constantly having their door closed.
7. Expecting us to be psychic and/or mind readers.
8. Dictating instructions via email on their phone and not reviewing it before sending.
9. Yelling for us down the office hallway.
10. Consistently asking us to cancel or reschedule appointments for reasons that are (in my opinion) not legit, including:
 - Being hungover.
 - Still being at lunch...3 hours later...
 - Not feeling like it.

TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO... AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #1:

Leaving Things to the Last Minute

How to Handle:

- Ensuring that the file is organized and everything that falls within the Assistant's domain is completed ahead of time and reviewed by/with the lawyer.
- Gentle, followed by nagging, reminders.
- Blocking off prep time prior to Questionings, Mediations, etc.
- If all else fails, be ready to reprioritize your time so that you can drop everything and help out where needed.

TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO... AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #2:

Drowning us with a ton of work all at once, all with urgent deadlines (think 3 hour dictation).

How to Handle:

- Talk to the lawyer about what you have on your plate in order to manage expectations.
- Encourage spreading out of task assignments.
- Work together to prioritize tasks.
- If all else fails, “accidentally” drop and break their dictation device.

TOP TEN

MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO...

AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #3:

Confusing us with their chauffeur, personal assistant, office cleaner, caterer, etc.

How to Handle:

- Cut them a break once in awhile. Neediness can be endearing.
- If an ongoing issue, discuss your employment responsibilities and set boundaries.
- If all else fails, start issuing personal invoices and/or put up a job posting for a personal assistant on your lawyer's behalf.

TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO... AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #4:

Responding to an x or y question with a simple yes or no, requiring us to follow up with “yes to x or to y”.

How to Handle:

- Plan specific times when you can assure your lawyer’s undivided attention to discuss files and seek instructions.
- Keep email communications clear and simple.
- If all else fails, keep questions limited to 5 words and 1 option.

TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO... AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #5

Not responding [to questions] at all.

How to Handle:

- Plan specific times of day when you can assure your lawyer's undivided attention to discuss files and seek instructions.
- Keep email communications clear and simple.
- If urgent, talk to the lawyer in person or over the phone to ensure your inquiry (via email or note) does not get overlooked.
- If all else fails, commence nagging.

TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO... AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #6

Constantly having their door closed.

How to Handle:

- Knock.
- Review their schedule to try and gauge appropriate times to interrupt or not.
- Encourage your lawyer to give you a heads up when they do not want to be disturbed.

TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO... AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #7

Expecting us to be psychic and/or mind readers.

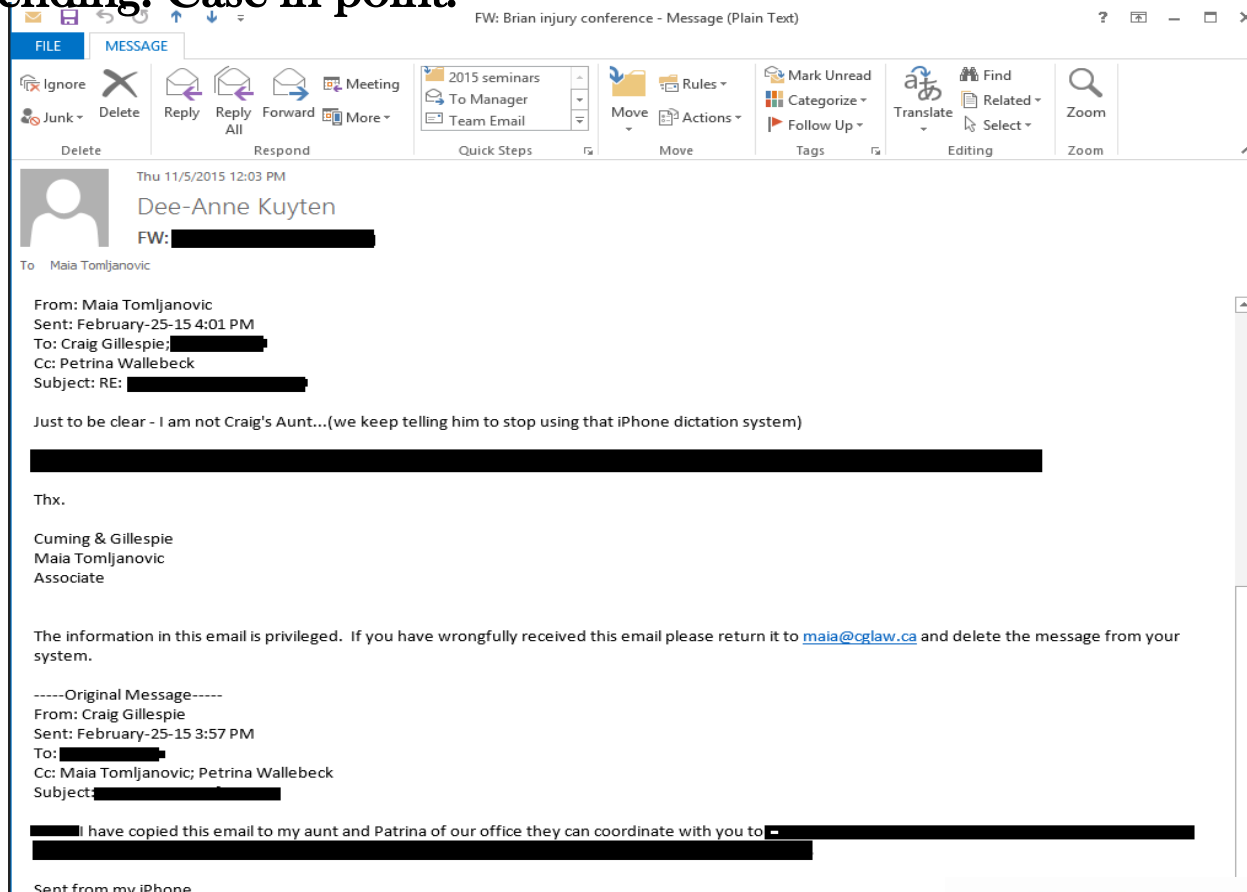
How to Handle:

- Confirm, don't guess, when instructions are unclear.
- Check twice when instructions are still unclear.
- Schedule regular meetings to discuss direction of files and review task lists to ensure you are on the same page.
- If all else fails, retain a psychic to be on call.

TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO... AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #8

Dictating instructions via email on their phone and not reviewing it before sending. Case in point:



TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO... AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #8

Dictating instructions via email on their phone and not reviewing it before sending.

How to Handle:

- Gently suggest that emails be reviewed prior to sending.
- Add a disclaimer to signature line for emails “sent from iPhone”.
- If all else fails, disable lawyer’s phone dictation system.

TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO... AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #9

Yelling for us down the office hallway.

How to Handle:

- Encouraging use of email to talk to me.
- Encouraging use of phone to talk to me.
- Encouraging use of legs to talk to me.
- If all else fails, construct a tin can telephone or a sliding window between office walls.

TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING THINGS LAWYERS DO... AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!!

Annoying Thing #10

Consistently asking us to cancel or reschedule appointments for reasons that are (in my opinion) not legit, including:

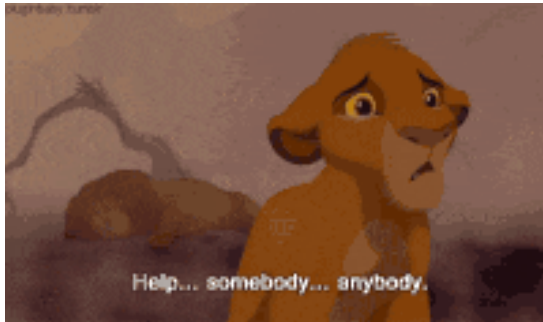
- Being hungover.
- Still being at lunch...3 hours later...
- Not feeling like it.

How to Handle:

- Communicate with your lawyer about their schedule.
- Ensure that their calendar is kept up to date and they are aware of upcoming meetings.
- If all else fails, simply don't schedule anything before 10 a.m., between noon and 3 p.m. and certainly nothing on a Friday afternoon.

MOST IMPORTANTLY...

To avoid feeling like this:



Doing something like this:



Or saying something like this:

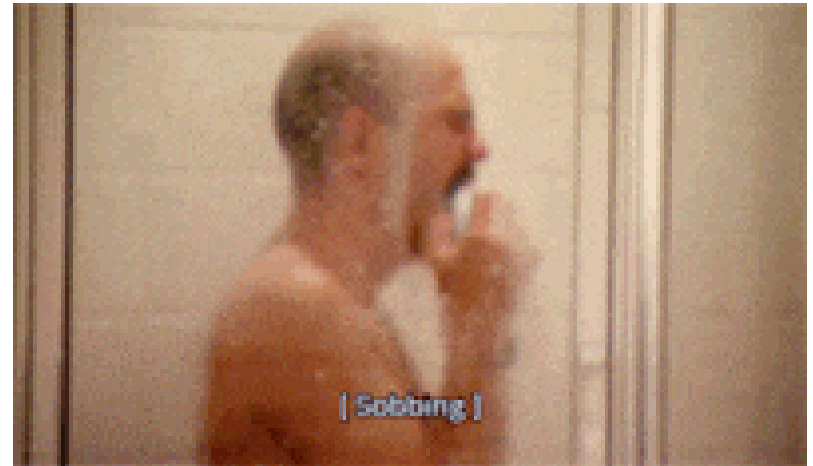


MOST IMPORTANTLY...

Shrug off the little things...



Remember that they would be lost without you...



And work together as a team.

