Pre Year-End Law Practice Checklist

BY MEGAN ZAVIEH | The end of the year is a great time to run through your firm's systems to evaluate which ones may be ethics risks, and where you can improve your business practices. This process will help you zero in on your biggest risks or concerns — and plan how to fix them. To begin, list the key components of your practice. Here are suggestions for areas to include (you may not have all of these in your practice, or may have some that are not listed here):

1. Advertising/Marketing
2. Client intake
3. Calendaring of key dates
4. Maintenance of client files
5. Closing/destroying client files
6. Trust accounting
7. Operating account bookkeeping
8. Continuing Legal Education
9. Technology:
    a. Email syncing
    b. Email filing
    c. Cloud-based file storage
    d. Outdated systems (i.e., fax)
    e. Password security
    f. VPN

10. Insurance
11. Billing
12. Time tracking
13. Client communication
    a. Systems for ensuring communication takes place
    b. Technology for actual communication (i.e., texting)
    c. Maintenance of records of communication
14. Office space/sharing
15. Employees
16. Contractors
17. Virtual assistance (receptionists, assistants, paralegals)

Next, place each component into a column based on whether you think it needs improvement (Concern), is critically in need of work (Worry), or is not currently in need of attention (Not Worry). Use a yellow pad, simple spreadsheet or the worksheet included here.

Megan Zavieh is the creator and author of "The Playbook: The California Bar Discipline System Practice Guide." In her law firm, Zavieh Law, she focuses her practice exclusively on attorney ethics, providing full and limited scope representation to attorneys facing disciplinary action, and providing guidance to practicing attorneys on questions of legal ethics.

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CONCERN	WORRY	NOT WORRY