

# Essential Time Management Tips for Busy Lawyers



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Attorneys serve as deep reservoirs of knowledge and experience for their clients, but they're often in short supply of another critical resource: time.

If you've ever gotten to the end of your workday and wondered where all the time went, struggled to meet pressing deadlines as matters exceeded your estimates, or wanted to grow your practice but worried about how you'd find the time for all your new clients, Rocket Matter's here with some tips that might help.

As a legal practice management software built specifically for today's busy firms, Rocket Matter helps law firms reach peak productivity—and over the years, we've picked up more than a few nifty time-saving tricks.

Here are nine key ways busy attorneys can maximize their time and keep their legal matters moving forward.



# Benefits of good time management practices for your law firm

All attorneys want to provide their clients with the best possible service, and that can lead to an urge to do *more, more, more*. But simply packing more work into your day without a solid time management plan in place is a recipe for disaster—both for you and for the clients you serve.

Trying to juggle too many tasks all at once is not only a recipe for stress and burnout but also an opportunity for missed matter deadlines, forgotten tasks, and inconsistent client communication to creep into your workflows.

By contrast, adopting some basic time management best practices can help you:

- Minimize the daily stresses that come with having too much on your plate
- Provide your clients with faster, more consistent service
- Avoid missed and pushed deadlines
- Stay on top of daily administrative tasks (even the ones you really hate)
- Boost revenue by reducing matter cycle times
- Set realistic goals and expectations for growing your firm—without overwhelming yourself and your coworkers



# Nine time management tips for attorneys

Managing your schedule will always be an ongoing process, but these best practices can help you get started with better time management.

## 1. MAKE A DAILY TO-DO LIST

As much as we might *want* to have more hours in the day, there's only so much you can reasonably accomplish. Taking the time to list and prioritize your most pressing tasks can help you make the most of the hours you do have.

Consider taking just a few minutes every afternoon to map out what your workday tomorrow will look like. It's also helpful to sort your tasks in order of importance: which tasks are a “*must complete*” to meet critical deadlines, and which could be pushed to the end of the week (or the end of the month) if need be?

You might also want to think about which tasks you really dread. If there's one task in the day you tend to put off until the last minute (say, preparing certain documents or dealing with a particular client), it may be best to get these tasks over with first thing in the morning. Doing your least favorite tasks upfront is a good way to stop them from being pushed to tomorrow (and the next day, and so on).



## 2. USE CALENDARS AND SCHEDULING TOOLS

You also want to have a clear sense of what your schedule looks like over the longer term—and a way to coordinate tasks with the other members of your team.

Digital firm-wide calendars are a great way to ensure that all your firm's attorneys, paralegals, and staff stay on the same page when it comes to appointments, meetings, critical matter deadlines, and more. Large and mid-sized firms can also set up team-specific calendars to foster closer collaboration on individual facets of your practice (think team calendars for your intake staff, marketing team, or specific practice areas).

## 3. SET REALISTIC DEADLINES

There's nothing wrong with setting high standards for yourself or trying to be as productive as you can be—but if you're setting yourself deadlines that are, well . . . a bit too *aspirational*, you're actually making it harder to plan your time effectively. (Even worse, you're putting yourself at a higher risk of burnout, which is already all too common among lawyers.)

As you set your schedule for the next day or week, take the time to think about how much you can *actually* get done (it's usually best to allot more time than you think you'll need). And if you find that you're still consistently running past your time estimates for projects, take a look at your time tracking records. If certain tasks are consistently taking longer to complete, look at this as an opportunity to reassess your timelines and workload.



## 4. BLOCK OUT YOUR TIME

Lawyers are good at a lot of things—but at the end of the day, they're still human beings, and the research suggests that human beings are pretty bad at multitasking. In fact, switching between too many tasks could be costing you up to 40% of your productive time.

Rather than bouncing between tasks throughout the day, it can be helpful to block out specific periods of time for each of the projects on your to-do list. Then, when it's time to work on a task, you can concentrate your full attention on the task until it's done. Blocking out your time can also help you assess how achievable your daily workload is. (And if you have fifteen hours of work blocked out for tomorrow, we strongly encourage you to delegate or push deadlines!)



## 5. AVOID YOUR EMAIL AND PUT DOWN YOUR PHONE

At first, it might be tempting to check your phone to see if that client's called back or take a peek at your email every ten minutes, but it's best to minimize distractions as much as possible while you work. Instead of checking your messages throughout the day, try making "email and phone time" its own scheduled time block first thing in the morning and before you leave work.

While it's normal to feel anxious about missing client communications, keeping the phone on silent will boost your productivity and help you attend to your client's needs more quickly—and that will leave them happier in the long run.

## 6. TRACK YOUR TIME AND LOOK FOR INEFFICIENCIES

That note above about checking your time tracking records? It only works if you're tracking time accurately and consistently—and that includes both billable and non-billable hours.

If you're tracking your time using [digital time tracking tools](#) like those included in a practice management software, you can run reports to find which tasks and matters take up the most of your time, how much of your time is going to billable and non-billable work, and where the bottlenecks are in your daily workflows.

You may find that certain tasks or matters simply need a more generous time budget (after all, there are some things you shouldn't rush, especially when it comes to complex legal work). However, you may also notice that certain non-billable tasks are taking more time than they should. In this case, it might be time to reassess your processes or see if you can delegate to someone else at your firm.



## 7. DELEGATE AND COLLABORATE

No one wants to have to pass on extra work to their coworkers, but biting off more than you can chew isn't doing anyone at your firm any favors. An overcrowded schedule leads to missed deadlines, and that leads to unsatisfied clients, cash flow issues, and more. As you analyze your time records, you might find that you're doing too much—and if that's the case, it's time to delegate some of that work.

It doesn't have to be a one-way street, either. There might be another attorney, staff member, or paralegal at your firm who actually *likes* that one administrative task you're always procrastinating on. Handing that task off to them not only clears up your schedule but also allows them to do the work they excel at. And if they're ever too busy themselves, you might be able to take some work off of *their* plate somewhere down the road.





## 8. DON'T LEAVE OUT PERSONAL TIME

For many attorneys, this might be the hardest (but most important) tip on the list.

Legal work can be fast-paced and high-stress, and even the hardest working lawyers need to make time for self-care. As hard as it can be to put your work on the back burner, don't forget to make space in your schedule for activities that leave you feeling recharged—whether that's exercise, meditation, taking a hike, or spending some extra time with family.

And if you feel like you really need a vacation, you probably do. Trusting your co-workers to hold things down for a few days is always better than burnout from trying to just push through it.



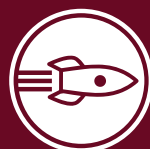
## 9. INVEST IN THE RIGHT KIND OF SOFTWARE TOOLS

Each of the steps listed above is easier with the right software at your side. A legal practice management software like Rocket Matter can help you:

- Track your time more completely (and waste less time on time tracking)
- Set and track key deadlines for your matters
- Foster collaboration between members of your firm
- Understand your productivity metrics
- Spot potential bottlenecks in your workflows
- And more

You'll also have access to powerful workflow and document automation tools, which can reduce the hours you have to spend on tedious administrative tasks and free you up to do more of the work you love.

If you're ready to see how the right software support can help you reclaim your workday, get in touch to [schedule a demo](#) with one of our legal software experts.



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