

## Develop the Engagement Habit

In our final blog about the key pillars of a comprehensive engagement process we turn our attention to timing. We ask, is it the right time for you or your firm to take this on?

Lawyers get themselves into hot water when they neglect to go through a thorough engagement process. [LPLC's engagement decision tool](#) sets out the three crucial questions to ask yourself before agreeing to act in any new matter.

### Right client. Right matter. But is it the right time?

So you have been through the process and determined that the client and matter are a good fit for your practice, but are there other circumstances that mean you can't bring your 'A' game to the matter? If this is the case, perhaps it is not the right time. There could be many reasons why you or your firm may not be able to deal with this matter in the way it deserves.

#### Overloaded?

You may be inundated with work and you don't have the hours in the day to give it the attention it deserves in the time frame required. This can be especially critical in litigation matters where there are limitation periods that have to be met.

How quickly does the work need to be done? How complex is it? Saying 'yes' to one piece of work might compromise your ability to execute your existing matters to the best of your ability. Is it fair to other clients and other matters to take on new work when you are already working to capacity?



#### Resourcing

Do you have the relevant staff you need to complete this work to a high standard? Are they on leave or about to go on leave? Are they already working to capacity??

#### Personal issues

Do you have other things in your life outside of work that require your attention or are distracting you? The most common things we see in claims that distract lawyers from bringing their 'A game' to work are: serious illnesses or death in the family, the lawyer's own illness, a relationship breakdown or a new baby.

Sometimes even things like moving to a new house or getting ready to go on holidays are enough of a distraction to mean things get missed. If any of these things are happening your capacity to handle a full workload may not be as it would be in normal circumstances.

It can be hard to say no to new work, especially if it is for existing or former clients. But remember it is harder if you disappoint those clients by making a mistake. Good client's will appreciate your honesty and integrity in telling them you don't have the capacity to handle their matter in the way it deserves at this time.

Having a network of other practitioners you can refer work to in these times is a good strategy and can ensure everyone is happy.



At the beginning of every matter ask: is it the right time to accept this work? Do you have the time, resources and appropriate staff to do this matter well?