

# Lawyer bemusement and time-billing battles



David Windsor  
Letter to the Editor

>> COMMENT & DEBATE

I've been following the Alternative Billing debate (published in *The New Lawyer* this week) with keen interest and bemusement.

Regardless of how complex we think the business of law to be, I'd suggest it is no more complex than the business of our clients, and often less so, and as such surely we can come up with rea-

***“Surely we can come up with reasonable, justifiable and certain pricing structures and options like any other business.”***

sonable, justifiable and certain pricing structures and options like any other business.

My SME and corporate clients ask for a fee estimate 95 per cent of the time. About 90 per cent of the time I get it right. The 10 per cent that I get wrong I either win or lose (swings and roundabouts). Either way, a happy client is a paying client is a loyal client – at least that's my experience. Although I don't make it to the rarified heights of 6+ figure legal projects, I often enough find myself doing 5 figure projects with varying degrees



*After much furour within the pages of The New Lawyer, Melbourne lawyer David Windsor writes a letter to the Editor on how he determines price structures to suit clients.*

of complexity, documentation, field work and haggling.

Agreeing a price, defining the scope and justifying the value is painless enough given that clients are expecting to pay, appreciate the service they are paying for and understand the risks and opportunities of why they're paying. I have the advantage of being in the game for 15+ years and having a pretty good idea of how projects pan out, both positively and negatively, thus making it easier for me than it would a younger player.

The way I see it, clients want three things from me:

1. A job well done (at a price)
2. To sleep at night (at a price)
3. Price certainty (no surprises)

And there are three things I want from my clients:

1. Satisfaction
2. Repeat business
3. Payment

I find that these six goals dovetail nicely and, providing you know your business, operate with integrity, have healthy self-respect and communicate value, then agreeing the right price is not such a big issue. And best of all, it can all be done without timesheets.

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***teams, and acts for SMEs and corporates. His mission is to share his know-how, operate with integrity and foster the growth of his clients, his network and himself (and go on skiing trips twice a year).***

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