

January 1951

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Recommended Citation

Jacob V. Schaetzel, We Find It Pays: Law Office Time Records, 28 Dicta 33 (1951).

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WE FIND IT PAYS: LAW OFFICE TIME RECORDS

By JACOB V. SCHAEZEL
of the Denver Bar

We have found in our office that a large part of our practice consists of telephone messages, both from the client and to the client. This is caused by the fact that the client is busy and so are we. We try to do all business that it is possible to do on the phone. We readily recognize that there are many cases and situations where a personal interview, either in the other lawyer's office or in our office, is better than telephoning. Nevertheless we have found that on many days, more than a third of our entire time for the day has been taken up with telephone consultations of one kind or another.

For many years we made no record of these calls. While we tried to think of all the work done when setting the fee, we came to realize that it would not be fair either to the client or to ourselves unless we knew fairly well the number of telephone calls and personal interviews, together with general office work such as typing, dictating and so forth, that we had actually done in a case.

In order to give us a better basis on which to arrive at a fair fee, we started keeping records on plain 3x5 sheets of scratch paper. Now as the telephone calls come in, or we are interviewing clients or other attorneys, or talking over matters in the office, we jot down the date, name of client, and a short record of what took place, such as, "wrote letter concerning title." We then jot down the number of minutes it took. In order to do this expeditiously we divide the hour into ten-minute periods and number them from one to six. If the matter runs over an hour, we just keep adding figures such as 15/6, i.e. two and one-half hours.

About once or twice each week we file these in alphabetical order in a separate file, not in the clients' files. From time to time, we ask our secretaries to go through these "time cards," as we call them, and bunch them together so that they are more easily handled. Once each month we go through them, and if we think there has been sufficient time recorded, we make a charge to apply on account only. Bills are sent each month to those clients for all money expended and work performed. There are some exceptions, such as in estate work. In such cases, the client is billed at the end of the period, provided it is not too far away. These time cards are then attached to the fee slip, and filed away.

We find it pays to do this because the clients are not billed all at once for fees which at times appear quite substantial. It also permits us to pay our income taxes on the basis of the fees earned during the period covered. We have tried this now for the past seven or eight years and have found that, without exception, the clients who are largely business people appreciate this method of handling their business. In arriving at the fee we further take

into consideration the work performed, the ability of the client to pay, and whether or not we were able to either save the client money or make some for him.

DENVER BAR ACTS TO INCREASE SALARIES AND NUMBER OF 2D DISTRICT JUDGES

As a result of the presentation and discussion of a report of its Judiciary Committee, under the chairmanship of George T. Evans, the following actions were taken by the Denver Bar Association at its regular monthly meeting on December 4, 1950:

I. RESOLUTION ON ADDITIONAL JUDGES FOR SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

WHEREAS, the volume of business of the District Court of the Second Judicial District has greatly increased since 1923 when the present number of judges of said court was fixed, from a total of 3835 cases filed in 1923 to 6817 filed in 1949, and therefore the present and anticipated load on said court far exceeds the reasonable limits of its capacity, with consequent congestion of dockets and delay in litigation;

It is hereby resolved:

That the Denver Bar Association urge the General Assembly of 1951 to increase the number of district judges for the Second Judicial District forthwith from seven to eleven.

II. RESOLUTION ON SALARY INCREASES FOR DISTRICT, COUNTY AND JUVENILE JUDGES OF THE SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

WHEREAS, it is evident that the present salaries of the judges in the Second Judicial District are grossly inadequate in the light of present economic conditions and are entirely inappropriate for the high importance and standing of the office:

It is hereby resolved:

1. That the Denver Bar Association urge the General Assembly of 1951 to increase the salaries of the judges of district courts for the Second Judicial District, the judge of the county court of the City and County of Denver, and the judge of the juvenile court of the City and County of Denver to \$12,000.00 per year.

2. That the Denver Bar Association urge the General Assembly of 1951 to submit an amendment to the constitution removing the present prohibition in Article V, Sec. 30, against increasing or decreasing the salaries of judges during their terms of office.

3. That the appropriate committees of the Denver Bar Association are hereby directed to draft whatever bills may be thought