



The Business Link

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# LEGAL ADVICE FOR TWO CENTS

"Sure, you can ask me a question. Just remember that you asked me because of my schooling, profession and expertise."



BY MOIRA WALLACE B.A., M.A., LL.B

Once people discover I'm a lawyer, I'm often approached with "Can I ask you a quick question?" Part of me thinks, "Sure, you can ask. But do I have to answer?" The question may be quick or simple enough; the answer never is. The question usually involves specific circumstances experienced by that person, who is looking for free legal advice.

Lawyers often provide pro bono legal services and I've done my share. I sit on a number of not-for-profit boards and often give my "two cents" worth of legal input. But two cents doesn't pay the bills and the value of my expertise is worth more than two cents. And yet some people aren't willing to recognize that. I recently read an article in Forbes Magazine by Adrienne Graham, "No you can't pick my brain, it costs too much," which really resonated with me.

Graham reminds entrepreneurs and business people not to give away the value they invested in becoming an expert in their field, which got me thinking. Lawyers get a bad rap for their fees; charging for every minute spent working on a file at what seems like outrageous hourly rates. Someone has to cover overhead costs for office space, salaries and the day-to-day costs of running a business. Then there are soft costs, like annual dues allowing us to practice law, errors and liability insurance, continuing legal education and memberships in associations, which allow us to remain up-to-date. We can't be effective lawyers without these crucial pieces.

If you want free legal advice, look on the internet. Be forewarned; you get what you pay for. It may be U.S. based law, not relevant to your issue or may be information given by someone

who doesn't even practice law. If you want good legal advice, know that you will have to pay for it. Ask the lawyer up front what his hourly rate is, whether he charges a set fee, what your minimum and maximum costs will be, whether there is a more cost-effective way to achieve the goal and what are the payment terms. You can go to [www.canadianlawyermag.com](http://www.canadianlawyermag.com) to compare those costs against the most recent survey of lawyers' fees across Canada.

If you are concerned about the fees you were charged, discuss them with your lawyer. If not resolved, you can request a Notice of Appointment with the Assessment Office of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice to review the bill, at a cost of \$75. You must start this process within thirty days of receiving your invoice. To determine the fairness of the bill, the Assessment Officer will consider any fee arrangement, time spent on your file, level of expertise required, importance of the matter, amount of money involved, success of the matter and amounts already paid. The Officer's decision becomes a court order enforceable against you for the amount determined to be fair.

Sure, you can ask me a question. Just remember that you asked me because of my schooling, profession and expertise. I'll probably give you an answer if it's simple. If my answer is a number of questions back to you, know that I am determining the facts to apply to the law. That comes with a cost. It will be fair. **BL**

For more information please contact Moira Wallace BA, MA, LLB, Chief Loophole Advisor and Notary Public at 905.575.0732, email [moira@wallacelaw.ca](mailto:moira@wallacelaw.ca) or visit Moira's website at [www.wallacelaw.ca](http://www.wallacelaw.ca).

# 10 ways to lead and succeed

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...today?" and waits for the answer, rather than rushing through the office saying, "Morning."

3. Make sure their body language supports their words. If you say, "I can give you all the time you need," don't constantly check your watch.

4. Has clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each team member, and revisits them each time there is a change in team members.

5. Conducts effective meetings whereby everyone is encouraged to contribute and listens to others points of view.

6. Utilizes conflict by listening for what is trying to be said, beyond just the words, and encourages a culture of personal responsibility without blame or judgement.

7. Reviews results and working practices while encouraging a sense of pride in personal achievements. Celebrating successes and coaching for further development.

8. Is self-aware. Being mindful of the impact she/he is having on others and maintains a flexible approach.

9. Builds strong relationships with others both inside and outside the organization. Every relationship counts.

10. Leads by example. To be a leader you need followers. To thrive you want your people to follow you not because they have to, but because they want to. **BL**

Daphne Bennett, Relationship Coach and Learning Consultant, works to transform the spirit of individuals, teams and cultures using powerful tools and strategies that work from the inside out. She can be reached at [daphne.bennett@sympatico.ca](mailto:daphne.bennett@sympatico.ca).

**X Call Before You Sign on the Dotted Line**

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