



PRACTICE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY SERVICE

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From the Desks of Your D.C. Bar Practice Management Advisors



Most Lawyers Don't Have an AI Problem. They Have an AI Strategy Problem

By Kaitlin E. McGee

We talk to a lot of lawyers who think they have a billing problem. Their clients don't pay on time, fight over invoices, expect more work than they agreed to pay for, and take up far too much time and energy.

Sometimes that is a billing problem. More often, it's a marketing problem. For the last few years, the advice around AI has been pretty consistent: learn it, try it, start using it.

That was probably the right advice when these tools first became available. But I

don't think it's enough anymore.

After talking with lawyers every month through Basic Training and one-on-one consultations, I've noticed something. Most lawyers aren't struggling because they don't know how to use AI. They're struggling because they haven't decided what they want AI to do.

Without a strategy, AI becomes a solution looking for a problem.

I see lawyers asking AI to write marketing posts because they don't enjoy marketing. Others want it to draft client emails because they're busy. Some hope it will write motions in unfamiliar practice areas because they don't know where to start. The question isn't whether AI can do those things. The question is whether it should.

The lawyers I see getting the most value from AI aren't asking it to replace their judgment. They're using it to support work they already know how to do.

For example, if I wanted AI to help me write something, I wouldn't start by asking it to draft anything. I'd start by talking about an idea or an issue I've been seeing in my work.

I'll dictate an idea exactly as I would explain it to a colleague. My thoughts are rarely organized the first time through. I jump between ideas, circle back, and interrupt myself because I often need to talk through an issue before I know exactly what I think about it. That's just how my brain works. AI's role isn't to replace that process. It's to help me organize it.

From there, I ask AI to turn those thoughts into a coherent draft. Not to make it sound more impressive or more "writerly," but simply to help me see the structure. Then the real work begins.

I'll go back through two or three editing passes asking myself: *Would I actually say it this way? Does this sound too polished? Does this sound like ChatGPT instead of me?* Then I'll give feedback, explain what's off, and revise it again. Over time, the AI gets better because I'm teaching it what my writing actually sounds like instead of expecting perfection from the first prompt.

The same principle applies to legal work. If you've never drafted a particular motion before, AI isn't a substitute for a mentor or an experienced colleague. It doesn't know your local rules, your judge, your strategy, or the nuances of your client's situation. It can help you organize information, brainstorm arguments, or identify weaknesses in your analysis, but you still need to know whether the result is any good.

Where I think AI shines is reducing the repetitive work that pulls us away from the parts of our work that require our judgment. Summarizing documents, organizing notes, creating checklists, repurposing a webinar into several short client videos, or turning dictated thoughts into a workable outline are all tasks that free up time without replacing the judgment that clients hire lawyers to provide.

That's why I think every lawyer should spend less time asking, "What can AI do?" and more time asking, "What *should* AI be doing?"

The goal isn't to use AI everywhere. It's to use it intentionally. The more AI becomes capable of producing polished, generic work, the more valuable your judgment, your experience, and your authentic voice become. Those aren't things you should be outsourcing.

To dive deeper into this topic, check out my recent [Lunch and Learn program](#).

Basic Training & Beyond

If you're starting a firm, [Basic Training & Beyond](#) is a great jumping-off point. Day One will teach you the essentials to get your firm off the ground, and Day Two will help you grow and manage your firm.

Here is how to start, grow, and manage a law firm in a large, urban market.

Our monthly [Basic Training & Beyond](#) is set for **August 11 & 27, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** We will meet in person in the Williamson Conference Room

on the third floor of Bar Headquarters. The program is presented monthly for members and law firm staff.

This program has been presented more than four hundred times for more than 5,000 lawyers over the last seventeen years, and many have launched and are now operating small firms. We stay connected with many small firms, and what we learn informs the content for this program.

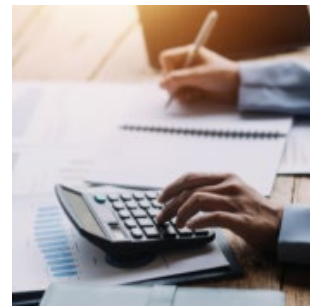
Managing Money

Managing Money

Our next in-person session on Managing Money is **September 9, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

We also present Managing Money on request for a law firm or organization.

[Register for an upcoming session or schedule a session for your firm here.](#)



Practice 360°

Practice 360° Returns October 7, 2026

This year's Practice 360° brings together practical programs for lawyers who want to build stronger, more efficient law firms. Join us virtually on October 7 for a full day of live sessions on marketing, AI, hiring, law firm management, ethics, and lawyer well-being. If you can't attend every session, you'll also receive access to the recordings after the conference.

Featured sessions include:

- **Using AI Without Losing Your Professional Judgment: The TRUST Framework™ for Solo and Small Firm Lawyers**
- **4 Agentic AI Agents Your Marketing Needs**
- **Navigating Small Firm Legal Ethics: From the Mundane to the Insane**
- **When to Hire, Why Not to Hire, and How to Keep the Firm Profitable**
- **Hanging Your Own Shingle: A Practical Guide for New Solo and Small Firm Lawyers**

Whether you're starting a firm, growing an existing practice, or looking for practical ideas you can put to work immediately, Practice 360° is designed to help you build a better law firm.

Successful Small Firm Course

Are you interested in a business incubator approach to growing your law firm?

Consider working with us on an individual basis. We offer the **Successful Small Firm Practice Course** in a series of one-on-one sessions on Zoom.

The Course serves as an incubator for solo attorneys and small firms and helps them work through their business and marketing plans with support, feedback, and guidance. Lawyers focus on the type of firm they want to create and work through the Course at their own pace with built-in accountability for achieving their business goals. If you are interested in this approach to creating and growing a law firm, contact PMAS@dcbar.org.

Resources

Missed any of these recent sessions? You can [access the recordings and materials anytime](#).

Here's a glimpse of some recent sessions:

- **I Hope This Message Finds You... and Other Signs You're Using AI (Wrong)**
- **Legal Design for Small & Medium Firms - Clarity, Compliance & Client Trust**
- **Recruiting and Hiring 101| Where to Start When You Are Ready to Grow Your Firm**
- **Can a Newsletter Really Help Grow My Law Firm?**

If you are interested in a practice management assessment, [click here](#).

– Kaitlin & Dan

In other news . . .

[Legal Ethics Opinion 392](#), Relationship Between Rules 3.3(d) and 1.6(d) in Civil Matters

For more information on the D.C. Bar Practice Management Advisory Service (PMAS), [click here](#).

CLE, Communities Events & Pro Bono:

Continuing Legal Education programs are [here](#).

Communities Events are [here](#).

Pro Bono Center training programs are scheduled [here](#).

Our Practice Management Advisors are:

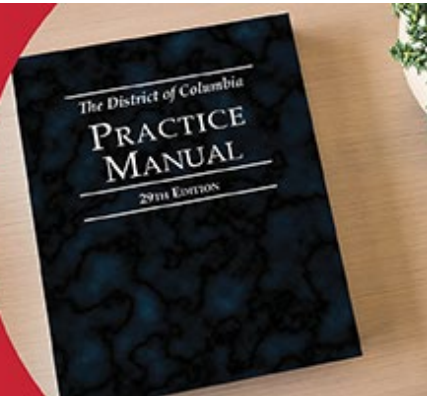
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Practice Management Advisors have a free and confidential relationship with D.C. Bar members pursuant to Rule 1.6(j) of the D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct.

District of Columbia Practice Manual

Every D.C. Lawyer's Must-Have Resource



This two-volume title, typically priced at \$495, is being offered to subscribers of this newsletter at a discounted rate of \$450. To obtain the discount code, please reach out to communitiesregistration@dcbar.org.



[Practice 360°](#) | [Courses and Trainings](#) | [Mentoring Resource](#)