



PRACTICE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY SERVICE

May 2026

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



Make Your Law Firm Easier to Understand

By Kaitlin E. McGee

Lawyers spend a lot of time focused on what documents say. We spend less time thinking about how people experience those documents.

Our recent [Lunch and Learn program](#) with [Tessa Manuello](#) on legal design explored how clearer language, better formatting, and thoughtful visuals can make legal information easier to understand and, consequently, more likely to be used.

Good legal design does not require special software or a consultant. Often, it means making simple changes to your existing templates that improve communication with clients, prospective clients, and other non-lawyers.

Here are five practical ways to start:

1. Rewrite one client-facing document in plain English

Choose one document clients regularly receive, such as:

- intake form
- fee agreement
- welcome email
- FAQ page

Replace unnecessary legalese, shorten long sentences, include a one-sentence summary at the end of a section, and use headings that answer common questions.

2. Add a visual to explain a process

Tessa noted that people tend to remember visuals far better than text alone.

Think about where clients often feel confused. Then add a simple graphic, chart, or timeline.

Examples:

- Steps in a divorce case
- Probate timeline
- Personal injury claim process
- Estate planning workflow
- What happens after hiring your firm

A basic timeline on your website or in a welcome packet can answer questions before they are asked.

3. Make your emails easier to scan

Many lawyers send strong advice buried inside dense emails.

Try this format:

- What happened
- What it means
- What you need to do next
- Deadline

Clients appreciate clarity, and it often reduces follow-up calls and emails.

4. Reformat dense documents for readability

You do not always need to rewrite content. Sometimes formatting alone helps.

Use:

- shorter paragraphs
- bullet points
- numbered lists
- white space
- bold headings
- tables for dates, fees, or deadlines

The easier a document is to scan, the more likely it is to be read.

5. Ask one simple question before sending anything

Before sending a document, webpage, or email, ask:

Could a non-lawyer read this once and know what to do next?

If not, revise it. That single question can improve almost every client communication in your practice.

Bottom Line: Good legal design is not about making things look polished. It is about reducing confusion, building trust, and helping people act on the information you give them. Small changes can make a big difference.

Missed the program? [Watch it here.](#)

PMAS provides free, confidential consultations to D.C. Bar members. To learn more, contact pmas@dcbar.org.

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 **May 5 & 11, 2026, from 9:15 a.m. to 4:30 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 **June 22, 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°

Save the Date: [Practice 360°](#) Returns October 7, 2026

This year's theme is **Thriving in Difficulty**.

Lawyers are navigating economic pressure, shifting client expectations, new technology, marketing disruption, and ongoing uncertainty. Yet many are still finding ways to grow and move forward.

Practice 360° will focus on what is helping them do it.

Expect practical sessions on the habits, strategies, systems, and decisions that help lawyers succeed during challenging times.

Featured presenters include:

- **Michelle Cotter Richards**, opening the program at 9:00 a.m.
- **Conrad Saam**, presenting 4 Agentic AI Agents Your Marketing Needs
- A program with the **D.C. Bar Lawyer Assistance Program**
- An afternoon **CLE with the D.C. Bar Legal Ethics team**

Additional sessions and speakers will be announced as the program develops.

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

[D.C. Bar Annual Well-Being Summit](#)

Thursday, May 7 | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. ET | Zoom

[Register Now](#) for the FREE D.C. Bar Well-Being Summit, held in recognition of Well-Being Week in Law and Mental Health Awareness Month. This year's theme, Building Inner Capacity: Strategies for Sustainable Wellness, focuses on practical approaches to maintaining well-being in a demanding profession.

Sessions will cover:

- Finding the grit to persevere during challenging moments

- Strengthening psychological flexibility through mindful acceptance
- Understanding the impact of hormones on performance
- Managing the effects of news consumption on mental health
- Rewiring the brain toward healthy optimism

The flexible, virtual format allows you to engage with sessions that fit your schedule and individual needs.

While designed for legal professionals, the Summit is free and open to anyone interested in improving their well-being.

Sponsored by: D.C. Bar Communities Office and the D.C. Bar Lawyer Assistance Program

[D.C. Bar Law Practice Management Community Networking Event](#)

Build your referral network, exchange ideas, and connect with D.C. Bar Community members in a relaxed setting.

Monday, May 11 | 4:30–6:30 p.m.

Beer, wine, and light bites will be provided.

[Pre-registration is required](#). Feel free to share this invitation with colleagues. D.C. Bar membership is not required to attend, though non-members must create a profile to register.

Registration is free for LPM Community members. Non-community members: \$10 early bird registration or \$15 after May 8.

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

Here's a glimpse of some recent sessions:

- **Lunch and Learn: 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?**

- **Can Your Fee Agreement Get You in Trouble?**

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:

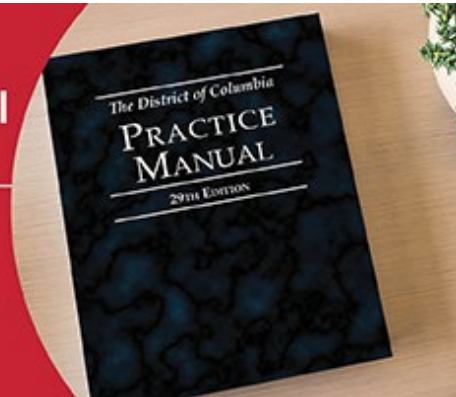
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Practice Management Advisors have a free and confidential relationship with D.C. Bar members pursuant to Rule 1.6(j) of the D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct.

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](#)