

# Why attorneys struggle with time management



A senior associate at a large law firm shared an anonymous [snapshot of her day](#) on Quora, outlining the stark reality of life in a busy law firm and lack of time management for attorneys.

“Documents begin to come back and a junior associate dumps work on me from outside of my practice group. I try to tell him to shove it, but I can’t because he has CC’d a powerful partner. I ignore the deals that I’m trying to close and deal with the junior associate’s query.”

A brief scan of her day shows work is dumped on her by those above and below her. This is the reason why time management is such a struggle for attorneys.

## How poor time management costs law firms money

Time management is a problem for small law firms as well. The [2019 State of U.S. Small Law Firms](#) states that small law firms often have to choose between the

practice of law and the essential tasks required to keep their law firm running.

“Nearly 40 percent of their day goes into activities other than the actual practice of law. Much of this is time for which the lawyer will never be paid.”

Forty percent doesn't sound too bad until you realize that an attorney working 12-hours per day spends approximately five hours on non-billable work. This means they have seven hours to work with. Here's the problem. These billable hours are battered by [billable leakage](#), [poor realization rates](#), discounts, and [write-downs](#).

Other sources state the loss is much higher. [According to](#) the Legal Trends Report, the majority of attorneys collect pay for only 2.3 hours of the work in their day.

## **Why time management is a juggling act for most attorneys**

Attorneys experience significant demand for their time. Whether it's a client or new associates on the team, there are a variety of people, circumstances, and tasks competing for your time and attention:

- Partners and associates who want to unburden themselves by giving you extra work
- Non-billable work that requires a consistent investment of time (e.g., business development, accounting, rainmaking)
- Crises to deal with — external crises like client emergencies and complaints, internal crises like covering for a particular practice group, or peripheral crises like advertising fraud
- A sudden change — an increase or decrease in client demand for a practice group or a loss of several key associates in your firm

## **Adopt new processes and boundaries**

Taking control of your time boils down to creating best practices and setting boundaries within your work. Adopting [legal practice management software](#), setting calendar restrictions for when you're available or simply saying, 'no,' when you don't have the bandwidth.