

The Client Experience Standards and Self Scorecard

(aka: A Reality Check for Firms
Who Think They're "Great with Clients")

The logo for Modern Split Media is centered within a solid dark blue rectangular box. The words "MODERN SPLIT" are written in a large, light green, sans-serif, all-caps font. A thin horizontal line is positioned directly beneath "MODERN SPLIT". Below this line, the word "MEDIA" is written in a smaller, light green, sans-serif, all-caps font.

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Let's get one thing out of the way:

Most family law firms think they deliver a “great client experience.”

They don't.

They deliver a **legally competent, emotionally exhausting, wildly inconsistent experience**... with a nice office and friendly receptionist.

This document is your reality check.

The standards listed are non-negotiables. Not “nice to haves.” Not “we'll get there eventually.”

If you want to be seen as a premium firm (and charge like one), this is the baseline. The bare minimum. And I know you can do better than that.

STANDARD #1: You Acknowledge Every Inquiry Immediately

The rule: Every new inquiry is acknowledged within minutes. Not hours. Not “by end of day.”

Why it matters:

Your potential client is in emotional freefall. If you’re slow, they assume you’ll be slow everywhere.

What most firms do:

Have a “by end of day” policy that quickly drives clients away.

What elite firms do:

- Instant confirmation (automated but warm)
- Clear next steps
- Timeline for response that is actually honored

STANDARD #2: Your Intake Process Doesn’t Feel Like an Interrogation

The rule: Intake is structured, efficient, and human.

Why it matters:

This is your first impression. Right now? Most firms feel like a cold deposition.

What most firms do:

Ask 47 questions with zero context and no emotional awareness.

What elite firms do:

- Set expectations before asking anything (a mini agenda helps keep everyone on track)
- Balance information gathering with rapport
- Make the client feel seen, heard, and supported, NOT processed

STANDARD #3: You Define Communication Expectations Upfront

The rule: Clients are told exactly how communication works before they ever feel ignored. AND they are told whom to communicate with for specific issues.

Why it matters:

Most client frustration isn’t about legal outcomes; it’s about not knowing what’s going on. It’s about exerting some kind of control during an emotionally charged time.

What most firms do:

Say “reach out anytime” and then silently resent it.

What elite firms do:

- Set response time standards (and stick to them)
- Define channels (email vs. phone vs. text vs. portal)
- Normalize proactive updates

STANDARD #4: Silence Is Not a Strategy

The rule: If nothing is happening, you still communicate. No news DOES NOT mean good news.

Why it matters:

No updates = client assumes neglect, incompetence, or both.

What most firms do:

Disappear until there's something "worth" sharing.

What elite firms do:

- Send "no update" updates
- Reassure progress behind the scenes
- Eliminate client guesswork entirely

STANDARD #5: Bad News Is Delivered Like You've Done This Before

The rule: Difficult updates are handled with confidence, structure, empathy, and control.

Why it matters:

Family law is emotional. You don't get to be clinically correct and emotionally tone-deaf. Be sure to read the proverbial room.

What most firms do:

Drop bad news in an email and hope for the best.

What elite firms do:

- Deliver verbally first (when appropriate)
- Follow up with written communication (it can be hard for someone to hear and understand what is being conveyed when upset)
- Contextualize the outcome and immediately outline next steps - I cannot stress enough how important this step is!

STANDARD #6: Your Billing Doesn't Feel Like a Surprise Attack

The rule: Clients understand what they're paying, why, and what's coming.

Why it matters:

Billing is one of the fastest ways to destroy trust. I have had to explain to hundreds of divorcing clients how retainers and billing in a firm works. Specifically, how there are differences in fees between Partners, Associates, Paralegals, Clerks, etc. You cannot assume a client understands.

What most firms do:

Send invoices that require interpretation skills.

What elite firms do:

- Set billing expectations early
- Provide clear, readable invoices (minimal legalese)
- Proactively flag cost changes

STANDARD #7: You Don't Make Clients Manage Their Own Case

The rule: The firm owns the process. Not the client.

Why it matters:

Clients are overwhelmed. They should not also be their own case manager.

What most firms do:

Rely on clients to follow up, remember details, and push things forward.

What elite firms do:

- Drive timelines and clear expectations
- Send reminders before things are due
- Anticipate needs before clients ask

STANDARD #8: Your Team (and "Brand") Sounds Like One Firm, Not Five Personalities

The rule: The client experience is consistent across every touchpoint.

Why it matters:

Nothing erodes confidence faster than mixed messaging.

What most firms do:

Everyone communicates however they feel that day.

What elite firms do:

- Align tone, language, and expectations
- Train staff on how to communicate, not just what to say
- Eliminate "it depends who you get" experiences

STANDARD #9: You Close Cases Like You Actually Want Referrals

The rule: Offboarding is intentional, not an afterthought.

Why it matters:

Your best referral opportunity is at the end - not the beginning.

What most firms do:

Send a nice note and final invoice, and then disappear. On to the next. Family law can feel like a "one and done" practice, but we ALL know that's not true.

What elite firms do:

- Provide a clear case wrap-up
- Reinforce what was accomplished
- Make referrals feel natural, not awkward
- Ask for testimonials and reviews

STANDARD #10: You Design for Emotion, Not Just Information

The rule: You account for how clients feel at every stage, not just what they need to know.

Why it matters:

You are not just delivering legal services. You are guiding people through one of the most destabilizing experiences of their lives.

What most firms do:

Focus purely on facts, timelines, and documents.

What elite firms do:

- Anticipate emotional triggers
- Reduce anxiety through clarity
- Make clients feel supported, not managed
- Use trauma-informed and neurodivergent affirming communication

STANDARD #11: You Don't Confuse "Busy" With "Effective"

The rule: Chaos is not a personality trait. It's a systems problem.

Why it matters:

Your internal dysfunction becomes your client's experience.

What most firms do:

Normalize disorganization and call it "the nature of the work."

What elite firms do:

- Systematize repeatable processes
- Protect client experience from internal chaos
- Operate like a well-oiled machine. Constantly looking to improve

STANDARD #12: You Respect the Client's Time Like It's Billable

The rule: You are as efficient with their time as you are with your own.

Why it matters:

While short delays can't always be avoided... Nothing signals "we don't have it together" like wasted time.

What most firms do:

Run late, overschedule, and speak just to hear themselves talk.

What elite firms do:

- Start and end on time
- Come prepared
- Make every interaction feel purposeful
- Put away their phone, and if using a computer, explain to the client that they are only using it to take notes.

Final Thought (The Part Most Firms Won’t Like)

If you read this and thought,

“Yeah... we do most of this...”

You don’t.

Because if you did, your clients would:

- Trust you more
- Refer you more
- And require far less hand-holding

This isn’t about perfection.
It’s about intentionality.

And most firms?
Are still winging it.

But don’t take our word for it...

THE CLIENT EXPERIENCE STANDARDS - SELF SCORECARD
(aka: A Quick Gut Check Before You Keep Saying “We’re Great With Clients”)

How this works:

For each statement, score your firm:

- **0 = Not happening**
- **1 = Inconsistent / depends on the day or person**
- **2 = Mostly solid, but not locked in**
- **3 = Fully dialed, no gaps**

Be honest. No one is grading you... except your clients.

SECTION 1: FIRST IMPRESSIONS (INTAKE & INQUIRIES)

1. New inquiries are acknowledged within minutes (not hours)

Score: ____

2. Our intake process feels structured, efficient, and human (not robotic or overwhelming)

Score: ____

3. We clearly explain next steps to every potential client immediately

Score: ____

4. Our response time matches the urgency of someone going through a divorce

Score: ____

Section Total (out of 12): ____



SECTION 2: COMMUNICATION (WHERE MOST FIRMS FALL APART)

- 5. Clients are told exactly how and when we communicate (and we stick to it)
Score: ____
- 6. We proactively update clients, even when there’s “no update”
Score: ____
- 7. Clients never feel like they’re chasing us for information
Score: ____
- 8. Our team communicates in a consistent tone and style across all touchpoints
Score: ____

Section Total (out of 12): ____

SECTION 3: CASE MANAGEMENT (WHO’S ACTUALLY IN CHARGE HERE?)

- 9. We drive timelines - clients are not responsible for keeping things moving
Score: ____
- 10. We anticipate client needs before they have to ask
Score: ____
- 11. We send reminders and guidance before deadlines, not after problems
Score: ____
- 12. Our internal processes are organized enough that clients don’t feel our chaos
Score: ____

Section Total (out of 12): ____

SECTION 4: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (THE DIFFERENTIATOR NO ONE TRAINS FOR)

- 13. We deliver bad news with empathy, structure, and clear next steps
Score: ____
- 14. We actively reduce client anxiety through clarity and communication
Score: ____
- 15. We recognize emotional moments and handle them intentionally, not reactively
Score: ____
- 16. Clients feel supported, not just “represented”
Score: ____

Section Total (out of 12): ____

SECTION 5: BILLING & VALUE PERCEPTION (THE TRUST KILLER)

17. Clients understand our billing structure from the beginning

Score: ____

18. Our invoices are clear, transparent, and easy to understand

Score: ____

19. We proactively communicate cost changes or concerns

Score: ____

20. Clients rarely question or push back on invoices

Score: ____

Section Total (out of 12): ____

SECTION 6: OFFBOARDING & REFERRALS (WHERE MONEY IS LEFT ON THE TABLE)

21. We intentionally close out cases with a clear summary and next steps

Score: ____

22. Clients leave feeling confident about what was accomplished

Score: ____

23. We have a natural, non-awkward way of generating referrals

Score: ____

24. We stay top of mind with past clients after their case ends

Score: ____

Section Total (out of 12): ____

YOUR TOTAL SCORE: ____ / 72

NOW... LET’S INTERPRET THIS HONESTLY

60–72: “Elite (Or Close Enough to Charge Like It)”

You’re doing what most firms think they’re doing. Now it’s about refinement, consistency, and scaling it across your team.

45–59: “Good... But Clients Still Feel the Gaps”

This is where most firms sit. Things work until they don’t. And when they don’t, clients feel it immediately.

30–44: “Inconsistent Experience = Inconsistent Referrals”

You have bright spots. You also have blind spots. And your clients are experiencing both.

Below 30: “You’re Working Too Hard for the Results You’re Getting”

This isn’t a legal problem. It’s a systems and experience problem.

FINAL REALITY CHECK

If your score made you slightly uncomfortable... good.

That discomfort is where better systems (and better clients) come from.

Most firms won't fix this.

They'll normalize it.

The ones who don't?

They're the ones quietly pulling ahead.

There's nothing particularly new and earthshattering in this document. It's simple and straightforward, but oftentimes that's where the genius lies. Because doing small things well and consistently, ensuring that your client experience is constantly evolving, is what will truly separate you from your competition.

If you're not thrilled with your scorecard and want to get those numbers up where you know they belong, we're here to help you improve every aspect of your client journey.

Request a Private Consultation.