

# WHAT I WISH I KNEW ABOUT... FOLLOWING UP PROFESSIONALLY

Real-world lessons for legal support professionals

---

*Because nobody hands you the manual for this job.*

---

## The Reality

A surprising amount of legal support work involves following up.

Following up with clients.

Following up with attorneys.

Following up with courts.

Following up with vendors.

Following up on records.

Following up on invoices.

Following up on deadlines.

Following up on the email someone absolutely saw and then mysteriously forgot existed.

And yet, almost nobody teaches people how to do it well.

Professional follow-up is not about being aggressive.

It is about:

- keeping matters moving
- preventing missed deadlines
- documenting communication
- protecting workflow
- reducing confusion
- making sure important tasks do not quietly disappear into the void

The strongest legal support professionals are often the people keeping momentum alive behind the scenes.

---

# What Actually Makes a Good Follow-Up

Good follow-up communication is:

- clear
- concise
- professional
- specific
- documented
- appropriately timed

The goal is not to sound robotic.

The goal is to make it easy for the recipient to understand:

- what you need
- why you need it
- when you need it
- what happens next

## Weak Follow-Up

“Just checking in.”

## Stronger Follow-Up

“Following up regarding the outstanding medical records request needed for attorney review prior to next week’s hearing.”

Specificity matters.

It gives context, establishes urgency, and helps move the task forward without sounding hostile.

---



# Professional Translations

Sometimes legal support work involves saying the same thing repeatedly in increasingly polished ways.

## **“Just circling back...”**

Translation:

I am once again asking you to answer this email.

## **“Per my previous email...”**

Translation:

Respectfully, the evidence has already been submitted.

## **“Friendly reminder...”**

Translation:

The clock is ticking and I would prefer not to discover this issue at 4:58 p.m.

## **“Please advise at your earliest convenience.”**

Translation:

I am trying very hard not to become dramatically more direct.

## **“I wanted to follow up regarding...”**

Translation:

This task continues to exist despite everyone’s efforts to ignore it.

Professionalism matters. But sometimes humor is the only thing keeping the legal industry functioning.

# Timing Matters

One of the hardest things to learn is when to follow up.

Too early can feel unnecessary.

Too late can create preventable problems.

A few practical rules:

**If a deadline is approaching, follow up earlier than feels necessary.**

Waiting until the actual deadline often creates avoidable chaos.

**Follow up before a problem becomes urgent.**

The best legal support professionals identify issues while there is still time to fix them.

**Document important communication.**

Especially for:

- court deadlines
- records requests
- discovery issues
- client nonresponse
- scheduling coordination
- filing requirements



**Avoid emotionally charged follow-ups.**

Frustration may be understandable.

It is rarely helpful in writing.

Save the internal scream for your group chat.

# Following Up With Attorneys

Attorney communication often requires balancing:

- urgency
- professionalism
- timing
- clarity
- respect for workflow

## Helpful Strategies

### **Provide context quickly.**

Busy attorneys should not have to search through five prior emails to understand the issue.

### **Offer concise summaries.**

A short recap is often more effective than forwarding a massive email chain with no explanation.

### **Include deadlines whenever possible.**

Dates matter.

Specificity matters.

### **Avoid vague urgency.**

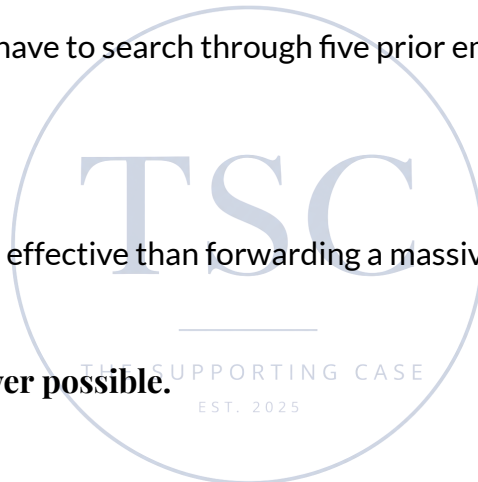
Not every issue is an emergency.

If everything is marked urgent, eventually nothing feels urgent.

### **Follow up again if necessary.**

One unanswered email does not mean the task disappeared.

It usually means someone got pulled into six other fires first.



# Following Up With Clients

Client communication often requires a different tone.

Clients may be:

- overwhelmed
- emotional
- confused
- stressed
- unfamiliar with legal processes

Good follow-up communication should remain:

- calm
- clear
- organized
- direct
- professional

## Example

Instead of:

“Need these documents ASAP.”

Try:

“To keep your matter moving forward and avoid delays, we would appreciate receiving the requested financial documents by Friday, June 12.”

Clear expectations reduce confusion.

And reducing confusion prevents approximately 70% of legal support stress.

That statistic is entirely unofficial, but emotionally accurate.



---

## What Works Better

## **Create systems instead of relying on memory.**

Use:

- task lists
- calendar reminders
- follow-up trackers
- deadline systems
- case management software

Your brain should not be functioning as unsupported litigation software.

## **Keep communication professional, even when frustrated.**

Especially in writing.

### **Be direct.**

Polite does not mean vague.

### **Protect documentation.**

Clear records of communication help prevent confusion and protect workflow.

### **Understand that follow-up is part of the job.**

Not because people are lazy.

Because legal work is fast-moving, high-volume, and full of competing priorities.

Good systems help everyone.

---

## **Final Thought**

One of the least visible skills in legal support is the ability to keep work moving without creating unnecessary conflict.

That takes judgment.

It takes communication skills.

It takes organization.

And honestly, it takes patience.

Following up professionally is not about nagging people.

It is about maintaining momentum, protecting deadlines, and helping matters move forward before small problems become large ones.

And in legal support work, that skill matters more than most people realize.

