



A GUIDE TO MANAGE THE TRANSITION

Law in the Time of Corona



1. ADAPT TO CHANGES IN COMMUNICATION

Office managers and practitioners must ensure that they communicate to their clients and stakeholders all the information which they will require about the changes to the Office's practices, policies and procedures.



2. KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH THE STATUS OF MATTERS

Practitioners should ensure they maintain communication with the judiciary to remain informed about the status of the various matters of which they have conduct that are currently before the Court.

**THESE ARE JUST THE BASICS.
TAKE A LOOK INSIDE FOR MORE TIPS!**



3. ADVISE ON NEW CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS & OFFICE HOURS

Attorneys must ensure that they keep their clients informed about the various contingency plans which they have implemented to maintain efficiency of operations during the pandemic.



4. UNDERSTAND THE EFFECTS ON PAYMENT OF ATTORNEY FEES/INVOICES

Practitioners must be cognizant of the impact of the pandemic on their clients ability to settle fees and invoices in a timely manner.



5. VERIFY ELECTRONIC CORRESPONDENCE

Attorneys should protect themselves and their practice against misinformation, phishing and fraud.

Managing the Transition

BACKGROUND

The Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to assisting all legal professionals as far as reasonably practicable. This brochure is produced by our Information Technology Committee and is one of a series containing guidance which we hope will assist legal professionals in continuing business operations during the Pandemic period.

If you have any questions, comments and/or suggestions on how to improve the information contained in this brochure, please feel free to contact the IT Committee at:
admin@lawassociationtt.com

CONTACT DETAILS

Address: 2nd Floor, #95-97 Frederick Street,
Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.
Phone: 1-(868)-225-8715-7
Email: admin@lawassociationtt.com
Website: [https://lawassociationtt.com/
contact-us/](https://lawassociationtt.com/contact-us/)

ADAPT TO CHANGES IN COMMUNICATION

Out of office responses

Consider setting up out-of-office responses to incoming telephone calls, automatic out-of-office replies and circulars outlining the Office's arrangements and the means by which clients and stakeholders may maintain effective communication with legal professionals. Attorneys should consider sending emails and/or doing courtesy calls explaining how they were responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Websites & social media

For firms or chambers that have a website, it is recommended to display a banner or popup informing visitors of the business' status, office hours, etc., so that their clients can proceed with appropriate expectations. In the event that no website exist, attorneys can consider creating a LinkedIn page to easily issue updates to clients and colleagues who are connected via that platform

Consideration should be given for offline messaging as an added means of notice by putting up an office front note with contact information to show and/or reassure the clients that the attorney is still within reach. It is further suggested that video conferencing is a good option since clients may appreciate the more human connection, particularly if they are stuck at home for long periods of time.

STATUS OF COURT MATTERS

Keep up-to-date with matters

The Judiciary has indicated via various Practice Directions that alternative avenues of electronic communication are the preferred means of accessing its services going forward. It is suggested that the attorney properly informs the client of the status of their matters via courtesy calls and/or emails.

Due to the ambiguity of the circumstances and the general anxiety that clients may experience when engaging in legal matters, clients may be panicked and may need reassurance that their matters are still being handled by the attorney and the Judiciary in the most efficient and proactive way possible. Reassuring clients often comes down to making it clear that the attorney understands where the client is coming from, and what the attorney is going to do about it.



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CHANGES TO OPERATIONS & OFFICE HOURS

Keep clients informed

Social distancing and other safety measures have severely impacted day-to-day operations for attorneys and these changes can be jarring for clients caught unaware. It is essential that attorneys communicate with their clients about contingency plans, not interfacing or visiting the attorney's office when sick, and good hygiene practices.

If an attorney hasn't already done so, it is time to test the IT infrastructure of your office, for the ability to work remotely. That could include limiting client meetings to phone/video conferencing, making sure staff can access work systems from home, and investing in collaborative software.

PAYMENT OF FEES/INVOICES

Consider the effects of the pandemic on clients

It is recommended that attorneys look at their clients, how they have been affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic and what impact it may have on the client's ability to pay for services rendered. Invoicing can be done online or via smartphone. Furthermore, it is suggested that the attorney engage the services of online/telephone banking to facilitate payment.

VERIFY ALL ELECTRONIC CORRESPONDENCE

Be mindful of misinformation, phishing & fraud

Having regard to the increase in exchange of information via online platforms, the attorney should ensure that policies and procedures are put in place to prevent misinformation, phishing and fraud as they relate to correspondence with clients and employees.

If possible, keep a record of such. For example, 'Zoom' has an option to record, download and save a meeting. Clients should be made aware if using this option. Attorneys could also ask clients to verify their instructions by way of email or some other traceable correspondence.

