**Simple Ways to Avoid a Claim**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Item** | **Improvements** |
|  | Does your firm have an established **central diary system**? | * Diarise all important dates, eg court dates, submission dates, limitation period etc.
* Designate a staff to supervise the diary to ensure immediate entry into the diary system and set appropriate reminders.
* Make sure everyone in the firm has access, updates accordingly and set reminders for themselves.
 |
|  | Do you run a **conflicts check** before taking on a matter? | * Maintain a client database for easy reference. Where applicable this should include, full name, identification number, company name, address, subject matter, lawyer-in-charge, file reference.
* Send an email to everyone in the firm to check whether there is a potential conflict. This includes branches that you may have.
* Make sure the database is updated by immediately including the new client’s details in the database once a matter is taken up.
 |
| 1. D
 | Does your firm have **procedures in place**? | * Implement standard policies for handling files, managing client’s complaints, handling client’s accounts etc.
* Make sure everyone in the firm is aware and understand the procedures that are in place.
 |
|  | Is there any **review on paperwork** before it is submitted? | * Proof read before any document leaves the firm. If necessary, ask a colleague to check on your work.
* Do not rely on templates or precedent work by the firm.
* Check for any changes in Rules of Court, applicable forms etc.
* Make sure the work prepared is as required and agreed by your client.
 |
|  | Do you **issue** **engagement letters**? | * Clarify your job scope and what you will not do clearly with simple terms for the client to understand.
* In the letter, include the lawyer-in-charge and who the client can contact should the lawyer is not available, agreed fee and any other aspects of the matter.
* Make sure you receive your client’s confirmation on your engagement letter before you start the matter to avoid any misunderstanding.
* If you are not retained as a lawyer or merely giving preliminary advice, make sure a letter of non-engagement is sent to the person you met in order to protect yourself and your firm.
 |
|  | Do you **use checklists**? | * Have a checklist for every area of work (eg conveyancing, litigation, will) and make everyone in the firm use it.
* Every new file opened should have its own checklist on the front of the file.
* Review the checklist regularly to include any update.
 |