

Client impressions **matter**



Consider the impression your office space makes on your clients

Over the years Lawcover has visited hundreds of law practices. Each practice is unique and many have widely differing methods of organising their space. Having to step over file boxes and piles of papers in thoroughfares is not uncommon. Sometimes a desk surface is barely distinguishable under the piles of paper and files spread across it. However, there are also many law practices that are the complete opposite.

On the whole, office spaces should be appropriately furnished and generally well maintained. It's important to appreciate that people, in particular clients, will respond to whatever environment they are in. Pause to consider how a potential or current client might respond to your office space.

The physical environment where you interact with your clients says something about you. That unspoken message can positively or negatively influence a clients' experience, shaping their perception of the importance you place on protecting client confidences, the level of respect you have toward your staff and with some, your competence.

If you think your office space could benefit from a makeover, the following tips may be useful:

- ▼ If a cluttered office space works for you, consider designating a conference room or separate office to see clients or visitors, and commit to keeping it clean and uncluttered at all times.
- ▼ Never leave confidential information in view of others. Anything that could identify a client must be kept in a non-client area. This includes items such as wall calendars, named file boxes or folders and mail on the reception counter.
- ▼ To ensure client confidentiality, remove or conceal identifiable items before bringing clients into your office.
- ▼ Before deciding to leave a client alone in an office understand that, if left unaccompanied, some clients may feel inclined to look through materials left on a desk or look over the display on a computer screen
- ▼ Remove any worn, damaged or soiled furniture from public spaces. Similarly, repair or replace worn or torn rugs and carpets – they can easily become a trip hazard.
- ▼ Public areas should never be used as a permanent storage space for anything, especially closed files.

Ask someone you trust to be honest and run a critical eye over your office space from the perspective of a potential client. If necessary, make appropriate changes.

Vital first impressions are often formed during a client's visit to your office. To ensure that impression is positive it's important to evaluate your office space and address any issues which may present a possible breach of confidentiality, a public liability issue or make the wrong impression.

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