

## Seeking client feedback

*What does your client think about the service you provide? Have you asked?*



BY [KIM COVERT](#) 6 DEC 2016 – CBA National Magazine

Clients like being asked for feedback, says Mark Howe, Director of Client Relations for Thompson Dorfman Sweatman.

In fact, Howe said during a PD session at the CBA Legal Conference in Ottawa in August, it's usually the lawyers in the firm who need to be convinced that asking clients what they think is not a bad idea.

Lawyer buy-in is one of two principle challenges to getting effective client feedback, says Sandra Goodwin, Managing Director of Client Development and Service at McInnes Cooper in Halifax, Howe's co-presenter.

“People worry about what the response will be,” says Goodwin, but adds that in her experience, where there are opportunities for improvement in the service provided, clients are quite diplomatic in expressing their dissatisfaction.

The second main challenge is following up on any criticism; “It’s better to not even ask for qualitative information than to ask and then not act on it,” she says.

Collecting information through surveys is the best starting point when approaching clients for feedback she says, through email or by telephone. That can be followed by a face-to-face interview to drill down for a bit more qualitative information, she says.

A lot of the feedback you’ll get won’t deal with “huge complex” issues, says Howe. “Communication comes up a lot but these things are relatively easy to fix.”

In fact, Goodwin adds, many of the things that clients mention are patently obvious – to the outsider, but the firm is generally too close to see the problems properly.

“When you go out to talk to clients they are thrilled to even be asked the question – you get brownie points for just showing up,” says Heather Suttie, of Heather Suttie and Associates, who was moderating the session. “Why would you not do it?”