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## **Case Study: Time management, delegation**

James, a 4<sup>th</sup>-year associate with a midsized insurance defense firm, hired me to help him increase his billable hours, decrease his in-office hours, and reduce the cuts made in his time billed. James had moved to his current firm after 3 years with a small firm in which almost all of his work was done on a contingency basis. He believed that he was not effectively capturing his time and was working much more than his time sheets showed (an average of 120 hours billed per month, while James was in the office working for about 10 hours each weekday and took work home in the evenings and on weekends). James was also concerned that his work descriptions were ineffective because the partner for whom he worked cut about 20% (across matters) of the time he billed.

James defined his initial goal as follows: " The next level would be a billable month where I exceed my minimum hour requirements (of 167), a month where my "cuts" are less than or equal to 5 hours (across clients and matters). Personally, a month where I do not dread reviewing, editing and

batching my time and a month where I record billable hours equal to or slightly greater than 75% of my time spent at the office (or working generally)."

By working on methods to capture all of his time (including using the timer on his billing software, using the stopwatch feature on his watch), to use his time more effectively (by blocking times during the day for large tasks, minimizing use of email, and creating systems and routines for repetitive tasks), and to delegate nonbillable work to his assistant, James exceeded the 167 billable hours goal the month we began working together. We also focused on describing accurately and fully the tasks he'd completed, with a goal of ensuring that his time sheets would communicate to the responsible partner and to the client the scope of the work performed and the necessity for it, and James reduced the hours cut to 6% during our first month working together and to a sustained 2% through the remainder of the coaching engagement.

James also created systems and routines to minimize the time required for repetitive tasks. For example, he created a system for responding to discovery by which his assistant would docket the discovery requests and the response date, set up a template for responses, and provide the requests, the

template, and a copy of the docket sheet within 2 days of receipt of the requests. Likewise, he created a standard set of documents to be used for each new case opened.