



The Honest Hour: The Ethics of Time-Based Billing by Attorneys

William G. Ross

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In *The Honest Hour*, Ross explains how to formulate ethical standards for time-based billing. Tapping a broad range of sources, including judicial opinions, rules of professional conduct, the recent ABA opinion on hourly billing, fee agreements, bar journals, law reviews, personal interviews, and nationwide surveys of hundreds of private practitioners, and an inside counsel that he conducted in 1991 and from 1994 to 1995, Ross shows how members of the business and legal communities view the propriety of various billing practices.

Ross also evaluates the magnitude of unethical billing, drawing on his surveys, the experiences of legal audit firms, and anecdotes. Although he concludes that overbilling is widespread, he contends that most attorneys try to bill their clients ethically and that much overbilling is the result of excessive zeal rather than fraud. He also explains how clarification and reform of billing practices could help to improve the public image of attorneys and stimulate greater public service by lawyers.

The Honest Hour discusses how attorneys and their clients can work together to develop fee agreements that will permit attorneys to spend enough time to produce quality work, while guarding against practices that exploit clients. The book also covers the merits and disadvantages of various alternatives of hourly billing and the reactions of clients and lawyers to their experiences with such alternatives.

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