A SHORT GUIDE FROM THE BILLING COACH

Pricing with Confidence

4 Steps to Charging What Your Work Is Worth

The mindset behind every fee your firm sets.

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A note before you start

For sixteen years I was a civil defense litigator in BigLaw. For sixteen years I watched brilliant lawyers do extraordinary work - and then describe that work on an invoice like they were apologizing for it.

This guide is about that gap. Not the gap between what your firm charges and what it could charge. The gap between what your work is worth and what your people are able to say out loud.

You will hear a lot right now about flat fees, subscriptions, and value pricing. Most of it is good advice. But every one of those models rests on one thing most firms have never built: people who know what their work is worth and can name the number without wincing. If you don't have that, a new fee structure won't save you. You'll just charge a flat fee you don't believe in - and discount that too.

So this is a short book about confidence. Where it comes from, why lawyers lose it at the exact moment they need it, and how a firm builds it on purpose - in four steps. Know it. Price it. Quote it. Hold it. It is written in plain language because the ideas are simple. Living them is the hard part.

Why I get to talk about this

I'm not teaching this from the outside. For the last four years I have been getting on consults with lawyers and law firms and quoting the price of my own coaching programs - and then sitting in the silence while a very smart, very sophisticated buyer decided whether to say yes.

Those buyers didn't know the value of what I do. Why would they? What they knew was the result they wanted: better billing habits, for themselves or for a team of timekeepers. That's it. So every consult was the same assignment this book is about. I had to understand why they wanted that result so badly. I had to articulate what solving it was worth to them - not what it cost me to deliver. And I had to decide a price I could say out loud without flinching, and then say it.

I thought long and hard about my clients' billing problems - what the missing time was costing them, what the write-downs were costing them, what it cost a partner to keep having the same conversation with the same associate. That thinking is what set my price. And I had one question I asked every prospective client, because it was the question I had already asked myself: if you could buy better billing habits off a shelf, would you pay this for them? Every single one said "of course." That's how confident I had to be in the value of what I was selling - and the only reason I could be that confident is that I had done the work of knowing what it was worth to them.

So when I tell you to know what the client is actually buying, decide your price ahead of time, cringe and quote it, and hold it - I'm not describing a theory. I'm describing my Tuesday.

Let's get to work.

Bill it like you mean it. It's time.

Molly

CHAPTER 1

The Problem Isn't Your Prices

The pitch you keep hearing

You've been hearing it everywhere lately - at every conference, on LinkedIn, from every legal tech company you've talked to in the last couple of years. Work is getting faster. AI is compressing the research, the drafting, the document review. And if you sell your time, and the time is shrinking, then your revenue is shrinking right along with it.

So the answer everyone lands on is the same: flat fees, subscriptions, value-based pricing. Stop charging for how long it took, and start charging for what it's worth.

And I agree with that.

But every single one of those models is built on an assumption that nobody says out loud: that your firm already knows what its work is worth, and that the people in your firm can say it. Out loud. To a client. Without discounting it.

That is where it falls apart.

Three offices, same floor

Let me show you what that looks like inside your firm right now - in three different offices, on the same floor, on the same afternoon.

In the first office, a flat fee. A partner is writing up a proposal for a new client. She knows what this matter is worth - she's done it a hundred times. She types the number. And then she thinks: *they'll never go for that*. So she knocks a little off before she sends it. Before they've seen it. Before there's anything to negotiate. The discount happened in the proposal.

In the second office, a subscription. A client is on a monthly plan. They've started calling more than anyone planned for - quick questions, a document review here and there. And the lawyer thinks: *that's a lot every month already - I'll just throw in the extra calls*. So the work grows and the price doesn't. The discount happened in the scope.

In the third office, the billable hour. An associate just finished a 34-minute call with the client. She opens the time entry, hesitates, and thinks: *they won't want to pay for that*. So she doesn't bill it, or she bills a fraction of it. The work happened. The value happened. The record says it didn't. The discount happened in the time entry.

> *Three different pricing models. The model changed. The discount didn't.*

Look at those three moments side by side. Same thought: what I did isn't worth what I'd charge for it. Same feeling. Same result - money given away. The only difference is the number of zeros and which line of the engagement it hid behind.

Here's the part most firms miss. In all three offices, the lawyer answered a question the client was never asked. Nobody called the client and said, "Is this worth it to you?" They decided for them - and they decided no.

A value problem wearing a pricing costume

When firms come to me wanting to talk about pricing, they usually describe it as a numbers problem. Our rates are too low. Our flat fees don't cover the work. We can't figure out what to charge for the new matter type.

In my experience, that is almost never the real problem. The real problem is that ***the people inside the firm cannot clearly explain what their work is worth*** - not to the client, and not to themselves. I call that a **Value Articulation Problem (VAP),** and you cannot fix a VAP with a new fee structure. The structure just gives the old problem a new place to hide. You'll end up charging a flat fee you don't believe in - and discounting that too.

What confidence actually is

One more idea before we go further, because the rest of this book depends on it.

Confidence is a feeling. It is not a personality trait that some people have and others don't, even though it can look that way when you watch someone name their price without blinking. Confidence is an emotion, and like every emotion it comes from a thought. Confident thoughts produce confident feelings. Doubtful thoughts produce doubtful feelings. And luckily, all thoughts are optional. You get to decide which ones serve you best.

If confidence comes from what you think about your work, then a firm can decide what its team should think about their work - on purpose - and confidence follows. That is the whole project of this book.

Try this

Think about the last time you or someone at your firm quietly reduced a bill, a fee, or a time entry before the client saw it. Write down the exact sentence that was in your head at the time. You'll need it in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

The Seven Quiet Discounts

We have a word for what the partner in the first office did. We call it a discount. We don't use that word for what the associate in the third office did - and we should.

Those three were just the ones you'd notice. There are seven ways a law firm gives money away, and most of them don't look like discounts at all. Which ones are you doing?

- **Throwing in extras** for free.
- **Dropping the number** at the first sign of pushback.
- **Trimming the invoice** after the work is done.
- **Quoting below your set price** before the client has objected to anything.
- **Bills never collected.**
- **Time never entered,** or entered and written off.
- **Absorbing extra work** without repricing it.

Nobody decided this. There was no meeting where the partners sat down and said, let's give money away this year. It just happens - one entry, one proposal, one unintentional decision at a time.

Two of them look like discounts. Five of them look like modesty. Like good service. Like "just this once." And that is exactly why they're dangerous. **A discount you can see gets discussed.** Someone asks about it. ***Someone owns it***. A discount that looks like being nice never gets discussed at all. The deleted .3 sits on that list right next to the 15% off - **and it is the only line item in your firm with *no owner*.**

Failing ahead of time

In the coaching world there is a name for what all seven of these have in common, and I think it is the most accurate name there is: **failing ahead of time**.

Failing ahead of time means losing a negotiation the other side never got to have. The client didn't object. The client didn't push back. The client never even saw the number. You conceded in advance - to a conversation that never happened - because you were ***afraid*** of how it might go.

> *You didn't lose the negotiation. You skipped it, and called the result a loss.*

Once you see it that way, it becomes harder to call the deleted entry "being reasonable" or the pre-cut fee "good client service." It's neither. ***It's simply a decision to not find out.***

The one rule

I give every attorney I work with one rule, and it covers all seven items on the list: **never discount your price once it's set.**

I want to be precise about what that means, because people hear it as "never lower a price," and that's not it. Prices can and should change. The rule is about how and when.

A price you ***decided*** on ahead of time - that is a price. It doesn't matter if it's lower than your standard rate. You chose it. You like it. It's an intentional decision.

A price you drop in the moment because of an uncomfortable feeling in your body - that is an unintentional discount. It's your brain's quick fix for the discomfort. But the end result is a client who never paid the price you intended - and a pattern that can play on repeat for your whole legal career.

So why do smart, careful, hardworking attorneys do this? There's a mechanism underneath it - and once you can see it, only then can you change it.

CHAPTER 3

Where the Discount Actually Comes From

It isn't because the clients won't pay. It isn't because the services aren't worth the price. It isn't that lawyers don't care about the firm's revenue. There is a mechanism underneath every one of the seven quiet discounts, and once you can see the mechanism, you can change it.

Here is a mindset model that reverse engineers why attorneys feel the need to discount their services at all. We'll run it three times - once for each office on that floor.

The billable hour discount mindset

Circumstance. A neutral fact. Your hourly rate: $450 an hour. The number has no opinion in it. "Too much" isn't in the number.

Thought. The sentence your brain says about that number. "***That's too much to charge.***" It sounds like a fact about the price. It's an opinion about the price.

Feeling. The emotion that sentence creates. Insecure. Doubtful. Apologetic. And uncomfortable feelings want relief. Your brain's solution: set it lower and you'll feel better.

Action. You set your rate at $350 instead. You never even say $450 out loud - not to a client, not to yourself. And you do feel a little better.

Result. You're charging $350. And now you have proof that $450 was too much - after all, you couldn't bring yourself to charge it. Your own actions just proved the thought true. And the loop runs again next year when it's time to raise your rates.

> *The price didn't create the discount. The sentence in your mind did.*

The flat fee discount mindset

Same engine. Bigger number.

Circumstance. A matter type your firm handles fifty times a year. The flat fee you'd quote: $7,500.

Thought. "***They'll never pay that.***"

Feeling. Anxious, worried, a little insecure.

Action. You quote $5,000 - before they've seen anything - to avoid feeling like you're overcharging.

Result. $2,500 less than your fee, fifty times a year. A thin margin - and proof that flat fees don't work at your firm.

The subscription discount mindset

One more. The fastest of the three, because you know the model now.

Circumstance. A monthly plan for ongoing advice. The fee you'd set: $1,500 a month.

Thought. "***Nobody will pay that every month.***"

Feeling. Doubtful.

Action. You set it at $900 - and throw in the extra calls for free. Discounted twice: once at the price, again in the scope.

Result. A plan that barely covers the work - and proof that subscriptions don't work for your clients.

> *Three prices. Same engine. Your results will always prove the thought you have about the circumstance. Change the thought, and the results have to follow.*

That's the engine. The rest of this book is the four steps that shut it off: know it, price it, quote it, hold it. We'll take them one at a time.

Try this

Take the sentence you wrote down after Chapter 1 and run it through the five steps. Circumstance, thought, feeling, action, result. Then ask: was the circumstance really the problem? Or was it my thought about it?

STEP ONE

Know It

> *Know what the value of your offer is to your clients.*

Most firms start with pricing their services. I start one step back - with knowing the value of what you're about to offer. Only then can you put a price on it.

First, a definition of value

Value is what the solved problem is worth to the client - not what the work cost you.

Not how hard it was. Not how long it took. One question: what is the client's problem worth to them, solved?

Hourly or flat fee, same definition. Your hourly rate is a statement about what an hour of moving the client's problem forward is worth to them. A flat fee is a statement about what the whole solution is worth. Same definition, different container.

Time spent vs. problems solved. An attorney who thinks of their work as time spent will always feel a little apologetic about the number. An attorney who thinks of their work as problems solved can say the number and mean it - because the client isn't just buying your time. They're buying their problem, solved.

Culture before calculator. You and your team can't charge more than you or they believe the work is worth. So how do you fix that? Not with a new pricing model. With a new practice - and I'll show you the practice in a minute.

You don't need to feel it. You need to see it.

Now, here's where I lose some of you. You're thinking: Molly, how am I supposed to know what the problem is worth to them? I've never had their problem.

Fair question - and most of you haven't. But you don't need to feel it. Your doctor has never had cancer. She doesn't need to have had it to know what it's worth to the person in front of her to be rid of it - or to price that. Lived experience is not the standard.

What you need is to believe three things about your client's problem: it's **real**, it's **costly**, and it's **urgent**. And belief doesn't come from having lived it. It comes from evidence. A belief is just a thought you keep thinking - so this is a practice. You keep looking at the evidence until "real, costly and urgent" is the thought you think automatically. The good news: the evidence is already in your practice. Four places.

One - you, as a buyer. Every one of you has paid a plumber, an accountant, a dentist. You weren't buying hours. You were buying the problem gone. You already know what a solved problem is worth. You forget it the minute you're the one selling.

Two - the needy client. The 11pm email. The third call this week. The "sorry to bother you again." You've been calling that a nuisance. It isn't. That is the want, showing up in your inbox - their desire for the problem to be solved. Every needy check-in is pricing data.

Three - intake. A client describes their problem and your brain goes straight to the legal issue. Breach of contract. Equitable distribution. Issue spotted - next. You just skipped the part where they told you what it's worth. So ask three questions and write down the answers: *What happens if this isn't solved? What has it already cost you? What does done look like?* That third answer is your R - the Result - and you have it before a single narrative gets written or a single flat fee gets quoted.

Four - what it's costing them right now. Exposure, money, time, sleep, relationships. And underneath that, the stress, the worry, the not-knowing. Your fee gets measured against that - not against your hours. Want proof? Read your firm's reviews. Nobody writes "super efficient document review." They write "she helped me sleep again."

> *Believe their problem is real, costly and urgent. Belief comes from evidence - not from having lived it.*

Three things to do: ask it, write it, read it back

So here's what to do with all of that.

Ask it. Those three intake questions - ask them every time, and write the answers down in the client's words. Put one line at the top of the matter: what they're afraid of, what it's costing them, where we're taking them. That line is the offer - and it's the destination for the flat fee and the subscription too.

Write it. Every time entry in ATVR, with the Value and the Result pointed at that line. (Four letters - I'll show you the framework next.) And if you own the firm, assign work the same way. "Draft the motion" becomes "draft the motion so we can get the injunction before the assets move." Your team never met the client's fear. That line, and the way you hand off the work, is how they inherit it.

Read it back. At the end of the matter - or every ninety days on a retainer - read the narratives back, and ask the client one question: what did this mean for you? Write that down too. Start a Value File: one line from each client on what it meant to have the problem gone. That file is the belief, in writing - the value in the client's own voice. And where the value concentrated across those entries is your pricing data for the next one.

Write it: the ATVR Framework

The middle one is where the daily work happens, so let's slow down on it. To make "write it" a habit people can actually use, I teach a four-part framework. I call it ATVR, and it sits behind every training I run. Four letters. Every entry. Every price.

A - Action. What are you doing? Review, analyze, draft, prepare, negotiate.

T - Task. What are you focused on? The motion. The agreement. The strategy.

V - Value. Why does it matter? The risk you found. The compliance you ensured. The exposure you closed.

R - Result. Where are you taking the client? The closing. The ruling. The deliverable in the client's hands. This is the destination - the line from intake. Every entry is one step toward it, and the entry should say so.

Here's what I find in about ninety percent of the time entries I review: they stop after A and T. "Review documents." Action, task, done. And for right now I'm not talking about the client. I'm talking about you. If you stop your narrative at A and T, you never answer the two questions that tell you what your work is worth. You did the thinking. You found the issue. You just never wrote it down - so it never became part of what you know about your own offer.

Think of it this way. Action and Task are the job description. Value and Result are the offer - the part the client actually hired you for. An entry that stops at A and T is a lawyer billing their baseline and giving away the offer for free.

The Value and the Result are where confidence lives, in both directions. They're where the client's confidence in you comes from when they read the bill. And they're where your confidence in your own number comes from when you set it. You cannot charge with conviction for something you have never once written down. And for the owners: get every timekeeper writing the Value and the Result, and the whole team starts to see what you saw at intake.

Same hours, two ways

Before: Review and summarize Acme background documentation. Three and a half hours.

Of what? For what? The reader has no idea what they bought.

After, in ATVR: Analyze and evaluate Acme's financial statements to identify potential legal and regulatory issues and strategize further handling.

Same lawyer. Same three and a half hours. Same work. Nothing was padded - I want to be very clear about that. The only thing that changed is that the value and the result are now visible. A confused reader gets skeptical, and skepticism turns into write-downs, fee

disputes, and a line-by-line review by someone in procurement who has never met you. A confident reader trusts you, and trust turns into faster payment, renewals, and referrals. Every invoice you send makes the reader feel something. You don't get to opt out of that. You only get to choose which one.

Write it down as it happens

None of this works if the entries are reconstructed on Friday afternoon. Time you guess at later gets rounded down - every time. Guesses get discounted before they ever reach a client. So the habit underneath everything is to capture time in the moment, in the small pauses, while the value is still fresh.

Same four letters, any fee model

Some of you are thinking: Molly, half my practice is flat fee. Good. This is for you especially.

Flat fee. The client never sees an entry - write them in ATVR anyway, for *you*. Read ten estate plans back and the value isn't in the drafting. It's in the design conversation where you caught the blended-family problem. Now you know what the fee is for.

Subscription. Outside counsel on retainer. The quick calls never hit an invoice. Write them in ATVR anyway - read ninety days back and you can see the value, and what the plan should actually cost.

Hourly. You're already writing the entries. Finish them, then read them back to feel the value and the client results.

You don't write the narrative so the client knows the value. You write it so ***you*** do. Do that for ninety days, in ATVR, and your billing records stop being a billing record. They become a map of what each kind of matter really takes and where the value concentrates inside it. That map is your pricing data. A firm of confident, in-the-moment timekeepers is already sitting on everything it needs to set a flat fee. It just hasn't looked.

That's Know it. You know what you're selling - their problem, solved. Step two is putting a number on it, and liking the number you put.

Try this

Pull ten of your own recent time entries. Circle the ones that stop at A and T. For each one, add a single clause that answers "why did this matter?" You'll notice two things: it takes about fifteen seconds, and the entry suddenly looks like it was worth the time.

Then, on your next intake, ask the three questions - what happens if this isn't solved, what has it already cost you, what does done look like - and write the answers at the top of the matter in the client's own words.

STEP TWO

Price It

> *Decide your price ahead of time - and like your reasons.*

Now you know what they're buying. Now put a number on it.

This is the step that gets skipped. Most attorneys go straight from "what am I selling" to "say a number" - and the number gets decided in the room, under pressure, with nothing behind it. A number with nothing behind it is easy to discount.

Two things that get tangled together

Here is what's actually happening when an attorney can't set a price and stick to it. Two different things are getting mixed up:

1. **What you are worth as a person.**
2. **What this work is worth to this client.**

Your fee is about the second thing. *It was never about the first.* But in the moment - with the client waiting - lawyers hear the number as a grade on themselves. On their personal worth.

I know it well. For the last four years I have quoted my own coaching fees to law firms on consults - and in the beginning, when I heard myself say the price, I felt a little vommity. Sitting in that discomfort, having just said my price out loud and waiting for the potential client to respond, was one of the hardest things I had ever done in business. Honestly, it still is - and my prices keep rising with the value of the work and the demand for it.

So here is the line I wish someone had handed me earlier on: **your worth is not for sale. Your work is.** The value of your services and the demand for them *always* sets the price. Untangle those two things and the price gets a lot easier to both decide and say out loud.

> *Your worth is not for sale. Your work is.*

Two questions that set the price

So how do you decide it - and how do you know you actually like the number? Two questions. I use them with partners setting flat fees and with associates setting nothing at all, and they work the same way.

Question one: What are they buying?

You already know this one - it's Step One. You asked it at intake. You've been writing it in every entry.

Start by asking what problem you're solving, and what solving it is worth to your client. Not your effort - ***the outcome***. Go back to the definition: value is what the solved problem is worth to the client. The Action and the Task tell you what the work takes. The Value and the Result tell you what it's worth. Price from the second pair. Whether that price is an hourly rate or a flat fee, it should reflect the outcome the client is buying, not just the effort it takes to get there.

And here's the part that takes the pressure off. You don't have to be exact. You're not calculating the client's private valuation. You're making sure you price from the right thing. A lawyer who prices from "what's at stake for this client" lands in a very different place than one who prices from "how many hours will this take me" - even when neither number is precise. The first is in the right neighborhood. The second isn't even on the right street.

The AI question, answered

This is also the answer to the question that keeps law firm owners up at night. **What is shrinking is the Action and the Task** - the drafting, the first-pass research, the document review. That is the part the stopwatch can see, and it is compressing fast. **What is not shrinking is the Value and the Result** - the judgment about what that output actually means, the risk you personally carry when you sign it, the outcome your client walks away with. None of that got faster. None of it got cheaper. Price from the pair that didn't shrink.

The plainest way I know to say it: your dentist can fix your tooth in two minutes or in two hours. Which one do you want? And which one would you pay more for?

> *Clients don't want your time. They never did. They want the toothache to go away - fast.*

I am not telling you to abandon the billable hour. I'm telling you to remember what's inside the hour now. It used to be typing and searching and reading. AI does that. What's left in the hour is the thinking. The judgment. Knowing which answer is right. That is the expensive part. So price the hour for what's in it. A faster hour that delivers the same result is a more valuable hour, not a cheaper one.

Consider two firms handling the same matter. The first understands its product to be the Action and the Task - and as AI compresses exactly that work, the invoice compresses with it. The firm got faster and got paid less for it. Efficiency becomes a cost. The second understands its product to be the Value and the Result - and as AI compresses the drafting, this firm delivers the same result sooner and charges what the result is worth, because the result didn't get any smaller. Efficiency becomes margin. Same work. Opposite outcome. The only variable is what each firm believes it's selling - and what its people have been writing down all along.

Which model? Let the data decide.

Stop deciding this in a conference room. After ninety days of honest ATVR narratives, your numbers will tell you.

Flat fee when the matter type repeats and you can clearly say what "done" means. Scope it, price it - and when your team gets faster, you keep the gain instead of billing it away.

Subscription when the record shows steady, recurring advice - the quick calls, the five-minute reviews, the check-ins nobody enters. That's work you are already giving away. Price the relationship instead of the minutes.

Hourly, defended, when the work truly varies. Some matters cannot be scoped honestly, and there is nothing wrong with that - as long as every time entry narrative is strong enough to justify its own value.

Question two: What is my price, and why do I like it?

Decide the number ahead of time - never in the room. Then write down your reasons for it and make sure you actually like them.

- "It reflects the results I deliver."
- "It reflects what's at stake for this client."
- "It's a price that takes into account my expertise."
- "It accounts for the risk I carry when I sign my name to this."
- "It pays for the years it took to do this quickly."
- "It's a price I can say without apologizing for it."

One test: would you pay it? If yes, you can stand behind that number without apology. If no, rework the offer - not just the number. The reasons you wrote down are what you'll lean on later, in Step Three.

Stop here. Most pricing anxiety comes from skipping these two questions. The lawyer never sat down and articulated what the client is actually buying, and never wrote down a price they like and the reasons they like it. Take the time. Write the answers down, in full sentences, before you ever say a price out loud. That's not extra work. That's *the* work. It's the difference between a number you're defending and a number you're stating.

One warning: don't crowdsource your price. There is no "right" price sitting out there waiting to be discovered. "Other firms charge that" is the worst reason there is to set a price, and everyone you ask is carrying their own pricing doubts - you will collect them. Answer the two questions, decide once, ahead of time, and have your own back with the decision. The confidence is in the deciding.

That's Price it. You've got a number and you've got your reasons. Now you have to say it out loud.

Try this

Pick one matter type your firm handles often. Answer the two questions for it: what is the client actually buying, and what's your price and why do you like it? Write both down in full sentences. Then ask the test question - would you pay it? - and notice what your brain says next. That sentence is the one Step Three is about.

STEP THREE

Quote It

> *Feel the cringe. Say the number anyway.*

This is the shortest step - because there's nothing to figure out here. You've already done the work. Now you just have to open your mouth and say it. It's also the one everybody wants to skip.

Cringe and Quote It

"I can't charge that" is a comfortable thought. It means you never have to spend time understanding and articulating the value of the services you're providing for your clients.

"They'll never pay that" is comfortable too. It means you never have to sit through the silence after you say the price out loud - or hit send on the email - and wait for the client to respond.

Discounting your prices feels like you are being reasonable. But I promise you, discounting is always - every single time - a way to get relief from your own internal discomfort - discomfort caused by a well-rehearsed thought *about* your pricing.

Because here is what will happen. The client will be sitting across from you, the number will be on its way out of your mouth, and your brain will offer you a discount. Right then. Before anyone has objected to anything. That is the moment you have your own back. You already decided. You already like your reasons. You say the number you chose, and you let the silence be silent.

The confident version of you isn't louder or pushier. The confident version of you is simply willing to sit with that discomfort for as long as it takes, without discounting your way out of it. That is what I mean by Cringe and Quote It. Feel the cringe. Say the number anyway.

How change actually happens

None of this happens in a week. It helps to know what the change looks like from the inside so you recognize it while it's happening - and don't quit in the middle. Firms move through four stages of pricing belief exactly the way individuals do.

Impossibility. "Clients won't pay that." "Our services aren't worth that." "Flat fees can't work here."

Possibility. "Maybe - for some of our work."

Probability. "It's working. The evidence is stacking up."

Identity. "This is just what our work is worth. This is just how we price."

Notice the order. The belief moves first and the evidence follows it. The firms that reach Identity do not wait for proof before they decide what to charge. **They decide first, and then the evidence supporting their decision shows up.**

One cringe that didn't pay off

One thing to expect. It is slow at stage one and fast after stage three. And the most dangerous moment is not the half-hearted attempt - it's the full-effort attempt that gets one unwanted result. A partner quotes the full number, the client walks, and the whole firm declares the price was too high. That's one client, not a verdict. It's one cringe that didn't pay off.

Plan for it, name it when it happens, and look at how the price was delivered - but **don't change the price. Change the delivery.** Pick one thing to tweak for the next conversation, and leave the number alone. It may take a couple of clients walking before you get better at saying it - but I promise you, a client will say yes. And then another. And then another. And then it's just what you charge.

> *The belief moves first and the evidence follows it. Change the delivery - not the price.*

That's Quote it. Now, once you've set your price and said it, it's time to hold it.

Try this

Take the price you wrote down in Step Two and say it out loud, alone, three times. Notice the sentence your brain offers right after. Then say it to one real person this week - a colleague, a spouse, the mirror - and sit through five full seconds of silence before you say anything else. That's the whole rep.

STEP FOUR

Hold It

> *Hold the number through the whole matter.*

Quoting it once is not the finish line. Here's what nobody tells you about step four: **every fee gets tested twice.** Once in the ten seconds after you say the number. And once more over the months after, when the matter grows. And both times the job is the same: you already decided this fee. Don't decide it again.

Test one: when they hear it, stop talking

The client pushes back. This is the second cringe - the first one was right before you said the number, and you survived that. The instinct now is to explain. To justify. To add three more sentences about how much work is involved. ***Don't.*** The more you explain a price, the less confident it sounds - to them and to you.

So you acknowledge it: "I understand, it's a significant investment." You restate the result they're buying - what done looks like, the answer to question one. And then you stop talking. Cringe, and let the number stand.

Test two: when the matter grows, let the letter talk

New parties. A counterclaim. The third round of revisions. This is where most fees actually get discounted - not because the number was wrong, but because the scope got fuzzy and you quietly absorbed the extra work. Don't. Holding a price in the middle of a matter is a scope conversation, not a pricing conversation - and you don't do the talking here. The letter does.

Your engagement letter already says three things:

What's included. Scope, written as an ATVR sentence, per phase. The Action and Task say what you'll do. The Value and Result say what the client gets when it's done. And here's the test: if you cannot write the R for a phase, you cannot flat-fee that phase. You don't know what "done" means yet.

What reopens the fee. New parties. A counterclaim. The third round of revisions. Triggers agreed up front turn scope creep from an awkward confrontation into a scheduled conversation you already told them about.

When they'll hear from you. What's included, what isn't, and the cadence. Clarity is what clients renew.

So when the matter outgrows that sentence, the fee reopens. That's not a confrontation. It's a scheduled conversation, and you wrote the schedule.

You decided it once. Don't decide it again.

You do not argue a fee. You state it. You already know how to do this. You hold positions for your clients all day long - evidence, clear story, no hedging, no "sorry to bother you." Holding a fee is the exact same skill. You've just never pointed it at your own invoice.

> *You decided it once. Don't decide it again.*

That's Hold it. That's all four steps.

Try this

Open the engagement letter for the matter type you priced in Step Two. Can you find the three things - scope as an ATVR sentence per phase, what reopens the fee, and when the client hears from you? If any one is missing, that's where the next quiet discount will come from. Write it in before the next engagement goes out.

THE BILLING COACH

The Whole Thing

Let's go back to where we started. Three offices, same floor, same afternoon. A flat fee knocked down in the proposal. A subscription that grew while the price didn't. A 34-minute call that never made it onto the bill.

None of those lawyers had a pricing problem. They didn't know the value of the work, how to decide on a price they liked, how to sit with the discomfort of saying it, or how to hold it through the whole matter. They had a sentence problem. "That's too much." "They'll never pay that." "Nobody will pay that every month."

And a sentence can be changed. A thought can be changed. And since a belief is just a thought you keep thinking, your beliefs about pricing your work can change too.

That's what this book has been about. Not flat fees or subscriptions or hourly rates - those are containers. What goes in the container is a belief about what your work is worth. Build the belief first, and any of those containers will hold. Skip it, and every one of them leaks.

So here's the whole thing: **Know it. Price it. Quote it. Hold it.**

1. **Know it** - know what the client is actually buying. Their problem, solved.
2. **Price it** - decide your price ahead of time, and like your reasons.
3. **Quote it** - cringe and quote your price.
4. **Hold it** - hold the price throughout the matter. You decided it once. Don't decide it again.

You'll notice there's a cringe in every one of those steps. Good. That's the feeling of a price you believe in before you're used to it. It's the only part I can't do for you - and the only part that matters.

> *The lawyers who price their work confidently aren't the ones who stopped cringing. They're the ones who cringed and quoted it anyway.*

Rolling it out at your firm

If you own the firm, here is the order I'd put the four steps into practice - and notice that setting the price is near the end, not the beginning.

One: teach every timekeeper ATVR. One framework, four letters, every entry. This is where your people learn to say what the work is worth - to the client and to themselves. Ask the three questions at intake and put the line at the top of every matter.

Two: capture in the moment. End reconstruction, so the time is accurate and the value and result are still fresh when they get written down.

Three: answer the two questions for one matter type. What is the client actually buying? What is our price, and why do we like it? Write both down in full sentences. Then look at ninety days of honest ATVR data for that matter type - what it really takes, where the value concentrates, what "done" looks like.

Four: cringe and quote it - and hold it. Maybe that's an hourly rate that finally reflects what's inside the hour. Maybe it's your first flat fee. Either way, decide it ahead of time, write your scope as an ATVR sentence, name what reopens the fee, and say the number without discounting it. Track the actual time against it and review the margin. Treat it as an experiment, not a verdict - if the margin is thin, change one thing and run it again.

And here's how you know it's time to raise your price: you can hear "that's too much" and hold the number anyway. When the price stops feeling negotiable to you, it's time to set the next one - and cringe and quote that one too.

Most firms start with the price - new rate card, new flat fee - and skip everything before it. That's why the new rate gets apologized for and the flat fee gets discounted. **There's no belief holding it up.**

I'm not asking you to believe your new price will work. I'm asking you to believe you can say it once, sit through the silence, and see what happens. That's all.

Your clients were never the problem. Your prices were never the problem. It was always the sentence. Change the sentence, and the number takes care of itself. Before you change what you charge, change your belief about the worth of your work. The price follows the belief. It never leads it.

Cringe and quote it. It's time.

Molly

About Molly

Molly Kremer, Esq. is the founder of The Billing Coach. She spent sixteen years as a civil defense litigator in BigLaw before becoming a certified coach through The Life Coach School, and she now works exclusively on the thing no one teaches in law school: how lawyers think about, record, and stand behind the value of their own work.

In the last three years she has delivered more than fifty billing trainings, virtual and in person, for law firms around the world, and has coached hundreds of attorneys from AmLaw 100 firms to boutiques. Her work centers on the ATVR Framework for billing narratives, the Four Stages of Billing Belief, and the mindset and habits behind confident, in-the-moment timekeeping.

The Billing Coach offers CLE-eligible firmwide billing workshops, group billing training programs, the Billing Mastery Mentorship, one-on-one coaching, and The Billing Generator, a tool that helps timekeepers write value-focused narratives in seconds.

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