

From Error To Action: Responding To A Mistake The Right Way

Risk Management Topic:

Practice Management



Candice Perriman
Risk Education Manager

Mistakes happen. Whether it's a missed deadline or a miscommunication, what matters most is how you respond and learn from the experience. For solicitors with years of experience, the challenge isn't just about fixing the error, it's also about leading by example in how you handle it.

Own it early

The instinct to delay or downplay a mistake is understandable, but dangerous. The longer an issue lingers, the more likely it is to snowball. Take action early to fix the issue and reduce any fallout. And let's be clear: covering it up is never an option.

Trying to bury a mistake will only compound the problem and can have serious consequences for both the solicitor and the client.

Keep your cool

Even seasoned solicitors can feel the heat when something goes wrong. However, panic clouds judgment. Instead, take a moment and assess the situation:

- **What's the actual impact?**
- **Is there a remedy?**
- **Who needs to know and when?**
- **Who can help?**

This isn't just about managing the fallout. It's about showing leadership under pressure and using the right support systems, while also recognising that mistakes are a part of practice.

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Speak up and seek help

If you're part of a team, inform your supervising partner or colleague. If you're a supervising partner, contact Lawcover, don't go it alone. We can provide expert support and guidance to help you navigate the situation.

Learn

Use the experience of a mistake to review your systems, update your checklists, or refine your supervision practices. More importantly, model a culture where mistakes are raised, acknowledged and acted upon. When more experienced solicitors admit errors and share what they've learned, it sends a powerful message: accountability is a strength, not a weakness.

Mistakes may be unavoidable, but a clear, calm and accountable response can be the difference between a resolved issue and a costly claim.