

Stress Impacting Mental Wellbeing of Law Firm Marketing and Business Staff: Report

Article By:

Connal McNamara

Lynn Foley

96% of legal marketers say that there is significant stress in the profession. 75% feel overwhelmed at work.

These are just a few of the findings from fSquared Marketing's "[Legal Marketing Mental Wellness Survey Report](#)". The survey polled 200 legal marketers and business professionals working at law firms primarily in the United States and Canada.

Recently, the legal industry has started to take stress and mental health seriously, but the conversation has invariably focused on the wellbeing of lawyers," says [Lynn Foley, CEO of fSquared Marketing](#). "That's not the entire picture—stress affects everyone. Law firms often have a clear hierarchy and stress flows downhill to fall on the shoulders of the professional staff."



The effects of stress on law firm staff has often been overlooked even though a number of [law firm professionals have recently died by suicide](#).

"When we initially sought out information about mental health within legal marketing and business development, we found that there wasn't any research on the subject," explains Foley. "From my experience working with lawyers, I understood that we needed more than anecdotes and emotion to advance the conversation, we needed information and data. While we aren't actually involved in HR or wellness consulting at fSquared Marketing, we saw that there was a need for this research and we

had the skills to pursue it.”

Why are marketing staff so stressed out? There are several compounding factors.

Overworked and overwhelmed

Marketing staff say they have too much work assigned to them and not enough support to effectively manage demands on their time. The vast majority also reported that their department suffered from a lack of marketing resources. This is a sure-fire recipe for chronic stress and, eventually, burnout.

75% of respondents said that they felt overwhelmed at work while two-thirds said that stress is eroding their ability to focus on the task at hand. This is unfortunate and ironic since high-pressure situations are when powers of concentration become most critical.



As one respondent commented: “We aren’t surgeons, but we do carry a tremendous amount of our own stress as well as the stress of others... There are no resources and there are very few people who would ever admit to needing them anyway for fear of appearing weak — stigma is an issue for everyone in the legal industry, not just lawyers.”

A divide between lawyers and “non-lawyers” (professionals)

It’s no secret that attorneys face significant threats to their mental wellbeing. As the American Bar Association describes it, “Lawyers work in an adversarial system with demanding schedules and heavy workloads, which may contribute to increased stress levels.”

A recent survey by Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation and the American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs found that close to [28 percent of licensed, employed attorneys struggle with depression](#).

The legal industry deserves some credit for recognizing this problem and many law firms are taking steps to improve the mental health of attorneys. Critics would undoubtedly say that change isn’t coming fast enough and that many initiatives are focused on symptoms, not root causes.

While more firms are advancing mental health initiatives, these are not always extended to professional staff. A [survey of 30 Am Law Firms](#) found that 36% of firms that offer mental health programming do not offer these programs to staff.

Many respondents to fSquared Marketing’s survey mentioned this divide between lawyers and staff. “Stress and mental health is mostly addressed for the lawyers and not the ‘non-lawyer’ roles, in my

opinion,” one respondent noted.

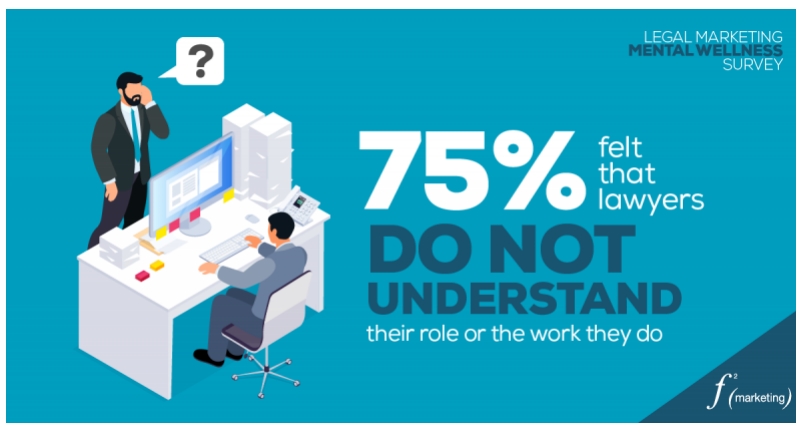
58% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “There is a focus on the mental wellbeing of lawyers in our industry.” Compare this with the 9% who agreed with the statement: “There is a focus on the mental wellbeing of non-lawyers in our industry.”

One respondent’s comments summarized a common perspective: “It is unfortunate that law firms segregate mental health awareness between lawyers and non-lawyers. Somehow they feel that staff (with whom they work directly) do not suffer from the same level of stress that the lawyers do.”

A lack of respect for marketers

The good news is that 92% of marketing and BD staff felt that they had an important role to play at their firm and many said that their ideas were often heard, valued, and put into action (73%).

Although professionals recognize their value, they often perceive a lack of respect from attorneys. The majority (51%) agreed with the statement: “There is a lack of respect for me/my role by the lawyers.”



Few factors are likely to prove as harmful to staff wellbeing. The divide between lawyers and staff is again a contributing factor. “It’s stressful”, one respondent commented, “when law firms hire ‘smart’ and ‘well-respected’ professionals who really want to do what’s best for the overall business, but then their ideas are brushed aside because they aren’t part of the partnership or don’t have a J.D.”

Changing the culture

The issues raised by this survey are disquieting. It’s clear that law firms need to take mental health seriously, for staff as much as for attorneys.

The survey did, however, find some cause for hope. For one, 62% of respondents said that their team’s marketing ‘wins’ are celebrated.

As one legal marketer said: “The level of stress varies significantly from firm to firm. Even though I am very busy at my firm, my work is appreciated and that goes a long way toward feeling good about my job.”

The fact that staff experiences vary between firms is evidence that law firms do not *have to* be toxic

work environments. It is entirely possible for law firms to foster cultures of respect. Those that do are likely to enjoy a competitive advantage.

As one respondent said, “A good, friendly culture goes a long way”.

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