

Law Firm Management: Tips to Instill Passion in Your People

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Having Superstars at every level of your law firm is the one thing that can truly differentiate you from your competition and keep clients coming in the door.

Unfortunately, I hear from many attorneys that finding and keeping good people is a major challenge when it comes to law firm management. This is something that bedevils a lot of businesses, not just law firms.

I run a fairly large business myself (60+ and counting), and dedicate real effort every day to ensuring that everyone who works here is motivated to do the best possible job for our clients and our company. Here's what I've learned about motivating the people who work for me:

Hire good people. You can't fix stupid, so don't hire it. Sure, we have all made hiring mistakes — people who interview great but their rubber never meets the road. Learn from those mistakes and put together a process for hiring that ensures you get the best possible people.

Get rid of the weak links. Bad employees kill the motivation in good ones. As soon as you discover you have a rotten apple, toss it.

Give them freedom. Good people hate being micro-managed, so as soon as they have proven themselves, give your employees the freedom to do their jobs. If they have a great idea for doing something different than the way you've always done it, listen. If it makes sense, run with it. Incentivize them for ways to cut costs and serve clients better.

Make it easy for them to do their jobs. The actual work we do is not easy, and neither is yours. So why make it more difficult for your folks by having outdated systems or processes? There are so many great automated tools out there to make the work process go more smoothly; invest in as many as you can and you will reap the benefits in a better work product from your people.

Celebrate! I love to celebrate with the people I work with, whether it's an informal lunch in the office where we can spend a little downtime just shooting the breeze or it's a big holiday do. Last year, I held a Secret Santa party that our team did not expect. I gave away an iPad, Kindle Fire, Samsung Galaxy 4, 55" HDTV, paid days off, round trip airfare, Amazon gift cards, Massage Envy gift cards, 2 trips to Sedona and Aria in Las Vegas, as well as a few hundred in cash. My team was thrilled and

fired up for the New Year.

Law firms that are running lean don't have to spend a lot to show their people how they are appreciated. Here are some ways you can do that all year without spending a lot of cash:

- **Say thanks:** Whether you approach your employees personally, send them a note, or praise them in a staff meeting – it's important to express your gratitude whenever they've done a good job. Saying thanks is one of the simplest yet most effective ways to make your employees feel appreciated.
- **Lunch meetings:** Nobody will turn down a free meal – and a lunch meeting gives you the opportunity to reward your staff with great food while also bringing everybody together to share their successes, stories and struggles.
- **Focus on the family:** Each of your employees has family members they love and care about. By showing that you value their families, you can cultivate a deeper sense of loyalty with your employees. Some family-based rewards can be as simple as a "free night at the movies" or an all-expenses paid dinner.
- **Change job titles:** Believe it or not, the more inflated the job title the more your employees will work to live up to it. If you hire somebody as a "janitor" he will pick up your trash. But if you hire somebody as a "workplace environmental consultant", he will keep your office clean and provide insight on how to make things more efficient.
- **Friendly perks:** Flowers, in-office massages, or gym passes can be a great way to reward employees for great work.
- **Upgraded office:** Is there any way you can improve your employee's office area? A new computer monitor, chair, or printer would go a long way in reminding your employees that they are valuable to your law firm.
- **Flexible hours:** Providing a bit of flexibility is often greeted with increased productivity. Whenever possible, see if you can let your employees tweak their schedule to meet their specific needs – whether it's a longer lunch or mid-day break to go the gym.

No one succeeds alone, so spend the time and effort to motivate your team and you will reap the rewards.

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