

Managing Your Way to a Better Firm

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Fresh out of law school, you were full of hopes and dreams of helping others and earning money doing it. Somewhere along the way, you realized there is much more involved. You have to start a business, manage people, grow sales, and much more, in addition to practicing law. To achieve the best results, you will need to be efficient and effective in managing your firm, including your people and your processes.

People. Your most valuable assets are the people you inspire to work alongside you toward your goals. These are the voices of your firm, the front line, the ones your client will talk to and deal with day in and day out while you represent them. Ensure that you select each team member purposely and assess their ability to best represent you and your firm. After choosing well, you must manage them well, as proper management has the effect of multiplying your efforts and income.

With each task that is to be performed, ensure that each team member is capable, but also have the least paid person perform the task that is competent to do so. See our sample Delegation Chart. In managing your team, it is important to assess the skills and desires of those you are managing, as well as to balance skills with challenge. Often in firms, there is either boredom stemming from a lack of challenge or anxiety from a lack of skill. Ensure your team is trained properly with each person having full confidence in the skills required to perform to the best of their ability.

Process. With all that you have going on, the path of least resistance is reactionary. It is very easy to be reactive, rather than proactive; however, a successfully managed firm requires proactivity, including planning, organizing, leading and controlling your firm. Each of these tasks work together to achieve a well-operating firm.

1. Plan – Set goals for your firm, as well as ideas/steps to achieve your goals.
2. Organize – Effective management requires organization. Put the goals, ideas and steps in order with who will be responsible for exact tasks. Ambiguity leads to ineffectiveness. Have a system of checks and balances to ensure proper execution of your plan. Examples are included in our sample Delegation Chart.
3. Lead – Lead by example and motivate those around you. If you are a diligent and hard worker, then your people will follow. Part of leading is ensuring a good environment at your firm to allow for hard work and not petty problems.
4. Control – The firm is yours, so take control to ensure that your goals and standards are met. When you allow others to control your firm, it will be their goals met instead of yours.
5. Repeat Steps 1-4 because when you stop working the system, the system stops working for you.

Successfully managing your firm leads to less anxiety, higher profits and a better work/life balance. Isn't that what we all want?

What are your skills as the leader and manager of your firm?

What are the skills you could work on to better lead and manage your firm?