

LAW OFFICE MANAGEMENT OFFICE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS

Legal Administrators

No matter the size of your firm, there are a number of functions and responsibilities that can be handled by a full-time legal administrator. If a large chunk of your time and your associates'/partners' time is being spent dealing with accounting, supply purchasing, cash flow management, personnel matters, payroll, billing and collections, and other similar administrative functions, then it is time for you to consider hiring a full-time administrator. It does not make good business sense to have your business being managed by lawyers who do not have the business training or experience to run the day-to-day operations of the firm.

The factors to consider in making such a decision are:

1. Determine how much time is being spent by all lawyers in the firm at performing administrative tasks that could be performed by someone who is not a lawyer.
2. Multiply the total number of hours spent by each lawyer (as determined in #1 above), by the billing rate of each lawyer.
3. Compare the costs calculated by #1 and #2 above to the costs of hiring a full-time, experienced legal administrator.
4. If the cost analysis indicates at least a break-even position, the firm should make the decision to hire an administrator.

An experienced administrator's value to the firm can be measured in more than just compensation paid versus lawyer time freed up from administrative tasks. In order to ensure the success of this decision, however, it is essential that all managing lawyers support the decision and are willing to delegate the necessary authority to the administrator to allow him or her to accomplish the duties he/she was hired to perform.

The managing lawyers must still be responsible for recruiting and training new lawyers, developing new business opportunities, and delivering quality and timely legal services to the clients. But the lawyers should not be spending time performing tasks that could be performed by non-lawyers when that time could be more profitably spent in billable work or client development.

In every law practice, there are two aspects of management – practice management and administrative management. The lawyers must manage the practice, but all other aspects of managing the firm should be performed by a competent and experienced administrator.

Operations management in a law firm, as in any other business, requires the talent, skills and expertise of someone with management training, human resources training, someone who possesses decision-making abilities and the other key traits required to manage the firm's daily operations.

Client/File Matter Acceptance

Many firms have the attitude that any work is good work and that any client is worth bringing into the firm. Another problem that many firms have is that each lawyer in the firm has the ability to commit the firm to new business without consulting the other lawyers.

THIS IS A 2-PAGE FORM.