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Attracting and Retaining Legal Administrative Talent

Kyle Ostrowski · Wednesday, May 31st, 2023

Executive directors and legal administrators play a crucial role in the smooth operations of a law firm. They wear many hats, ensuring organization, facilitating communication, balancing accounts, and scheduling dockets, among many other things. They're the drivers behind the business of law making sure that nothing slips through the cracks.

But all of these responsibilities require a specific kind of person and can add up to a highly stressful job. Fortunately, legal technology makes it easier than ever to support legal administrative staff so they are able to focus on higher-level work and do so with and less unneeded stress.

In this article, we'll discuss how to attract and retain law firm administrative staff, including how technology can help you deliver the support that administrative personnel need.

Why is it hard to recruit new talent to administrative roles in law firms?

A [2022 Report on the State of the Legal Market](#) from the Thomson Reuters Institute and the Georgetown Law Center noted "serious retention challenges with respect to professional staff other than lawyers." In a tight talent market, "many [administrators] feel empowered to shop around to improve their compensation and working conditions. Law firms may have to confront something they haven't seen in the legal industry in quite a while: leverage owned by those who are not attorneys."

In today's environment, legal administrative professionals know they have earned better work conditions. They want to feel valued in terms of compensation and recognition and want to have a better work/life balance. It's clear that law firms need to act now to ensure that they can both hire and retain top administrative talent.

What can I do to attract and keep new top administrative talent?

To attract and keep legal administrative talent, your law firm needs to take a strategic approach. Here are a few ways that your firm can get started.

Offer competitive compensation and benefits

Money talks: it's an obvious reason that people choose a job and stick with it. People want to be paid what they are worth and receive compensation consistent with the value that they bring. By offering compensation and benefits packages that align with what's being offered in the legal market, you'll show new talent that your firm values their role and prevent them from looking to jump ship to your competitors.

However, it takes more than just compensation to make a staff job at a law firm fulfilling.

Build a law firm culture that appreciates the value of administrative staff

Over the years, some law firms have maintained a [de facto caste system](#) that separates lawyers from nonlawyer staff. The very word "nonlawyer" is part of the problem, minimizing the importance of the work that law firm staff do. This type of firm culture sometimes also leads to heavy investment in tools, technology, and benefits to support lawyers but less investment for staff. This approach hurts the efficiency of the entire firm.

To ensure you build a culture that supports legal staff, emphasize the strategic importance of administrative work and highlight the varied responsibilities that administrative personnel have and how they help your law firm function and grow. We also recommend outlining clear career progression paths for administrative professionals in your organization. For example, a firm can offer opportunities for continuous learning and development, such as training programs, workshops, and certifications. Also consider how you can implement technology designed to support them working more efficiently, such as tech platforms that enable them to [streamline calendaring](#), [simplify document management](#), [improve billing practices](#), and handle other strategic tasks.

Find ways to improve work/life balance

Work/life balance is important across the board and it plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining top talent, including legal administrative staff. Administrative staff typically face demanding workloads, tight deadlines, and high-pressure situations along with attorneys and both sides appreciate benefits such as paid time off and flexible work arrangements.

Hybrid work arrangements are an important perk for today's admins, and enabling staff to work from home requires the right legal technology. [Cloud-based legal software](#) allows administrative personnel to work from anywhere. The right [matter management](#) platform will put [all of the essential information about a matter or client](#) at your staff's fingertips, keeping all related records such as texts, bills, and documents corralled in one place. A cloud-based [client portal](#) avoids back-and-forth, time-consuming emails and reduces the repetitive work on your admins' plate by giving clients direct access to the answers they need. Leading cloud-based [document management platforms](#) preserve client confidentiality and protect sensitive matter details, eliminating the risks of sending confidential documents in unencrypted emails.

Simplify tedious work

But improving the work life for your team goes beyond access. A critical part of making work more fulfilling requires firms to give staff the tools that simplify their work.

[Automating tedious, repetitive, manual work](#) like pre-billing and client intake not only makes admins' work more efficient, but it also means that your team can devote their time to higher-value work that requires a higher skill level. Allowing administrative professionals to focus on more strategic tasks creates a more satisfying work environment. You can also improve their workday with tools that foster communication and streamline project management. This technology reduces administrative bottlenecks, enhances efficiency, and fosters collaboration, all of which can help attract and retain legal staff.

Enhance your law firm's brand

There are lots of reasons to invest in branding, one of which is that legal administrative professionals in the market will Google your [law firm's website](#) and assess its online presence, including not just its job listings but also its culture. A well-designed, informative website enhances your firm's credibility and professionalism, which can attract high-quality administrative staff seeking career opportunities with reputable, forward-thinking organizations.

We recommend a professional yet friendly website that includes staff and administrator bios. This will emphasize to candidates that administrative professionals are a valued part of your firm's legal

team. You can also share testimonials from staff and offer a glimpse into what it's like to work for your law firm, so candidates can determine whether they're a good fit.

Use legal technology to attract legal administrative professionals now

In today's competitive job market, your law firm needs to do more than offer a competitive salary and standard benefits. You also need to invest the overall importance of your administrative staff, including in legal technology, showing them that you value them and their work enough to help them do it more efficiently and with fewer headaches.

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