

Freedom through systems

The business of running a law practice can be extremely difficult and stressful. As well, the actual practice of law is frequently very demanding. It seems as though there is always a fire to put out. Because of this, I believe it is worthwhile to always find ways to make things easier and less stressful. An effective way to do that is to create systems in your practice. I have found the more systemized I make my practice, the more enjoyable, and profitable, it becomes. More importantly, systems provide freedom. Here are ways a law firm can be leveraged by the use of systems:

Hiring, onboarding, firing. In order for systems to work, there must first be people that are brought on to run the systems. But finding the right people is done through either random luck (this almost never happens), or through an organized and methodical approach using systems. This means having clearly defined processes for how job ads are written and broadcasted, how the different interview stages are conducted, the questions that will be asked at the interviews, how a job offer is presented, etc. The more you can break down the hiring process into small and clearly defined steps, the easier it is to attract and hire the right candidates, who will be the ones running the systems you installed. After all, repelling the wrong candidates (and the problems they can cause to a practice) is just as important as attracting the right candidates.

Onboarding too should be systematized. The more efficient and faster you can train new hires the better. How do new hires learn the tasks they are responsible to perform? Do you have office manuals that break down how things in your office get done? Do you have videos as well that teach and reinforce for new hires step-by-step instructions? Onboarding systems are crucial because when a team member leaves, a smooth onboarding process allows for a seamless transition into your firm by new team members. Further, the new team member will learn in a very organized way exactly what is expected for the given role, and how to perform those functions correctly.

When it comes to firing, this process too should run on systems. You can have a clearly defined and documented process in place that can make this oftentimes difficult and awkward aspect of running a practice as smooth as possible. Considerations such as who will be in the room when team members are fired, what they will be told, how they will be told, and the way the severance agreement (if applicable) will be presented can all be systematized. This is even more important so as to avoid all of the stress, time, and worry that a potential claim or lawsuit for unlawful termination can bring. The cleaner you can make the firing process, the better it will be for you and your firm.

Marketing. Does your marketing consist of random acts, or is it organized and systematized? Without solid marketing, a practice cannot grow, let alone sustain itself. Marketing is the oxygen of a law practice and should run on systems in order to be most effective and efficient. Most marketing can be automated. Email follow-up systems can be leveraged to convert potential clients. Both organic and paid

social media posts can be automated through software. Blog writing can and should run on a schedule so that content regularly gets put out. The more intentional and systematized you can make your marketing, the more your practice will be able to bring in more potential new clients. Bonus tip: Hire a marketing assistant if you don't already have one. It is a complete and total game-changer.

Client communication and working up cases. Do you have a system in place for reminding team members to call clients regularly? Given how seriously important it is to keep clients informed about the status of their case, client communication should be systematized so it never falls through the cracks. Various case management software platforms provide this type of automation that will prompt team members to call clients, as well as to work up the cases in a systematized manner. We here use software that prompts team members to call clients every three weeks. This ensures clients remain happy, and their cases are worked on consistently. This significantly reduces the risk a client will file an ethics complaint over lack of communication, and all the stress and aggravation that can bring to a practice.

Systems allows law firms to operate more efficiently and effectively. Plus, they reduce the number of fires that need to be put out, which reduces stress for everyone in the office. The more you can implement and refine your systems and processes, the more rewarding, easier to manage, and profitable your practice will become. More importantly, systems allow for greater freedom, which is what we all arguably want more than anything from our practices.