

Til Death Do Us Part: Hiring and Retaining Star Talent

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I am the Managing Partner of a mid-sized boutique family law firm. I have been in this role for the last 6 years. Our firm, which is a partnership, has been in existence for over 30 years and is a well-respected firm in Calgary. Six years ago, in 2011, we experienced a serious challenge. Half of our partners left along with Administrative Staff and Associates to pursue other opportunities. We rebuilt our firm and in the process reflected a great deal on the topics addressed in this seminar. What we have learned may be of benefit to others.

One of the first steps we determined was to reflect on the philosophy of your firm. What type of firm do you want? The decisions you make and the people you hire should fit within the philosophy of your firm. For example, in our firm, we determined that what was important to us “our firm philosophy” was the following:

1. We would continue to provide top quality work with the highest ethical standards.
2. We would have a firm first culture. Our firm or the “whole” would come before the needs to rights of any one individual lawyer or staff.
3. We would foster a team environment. We did not wish a firm where lawyers simply worked on their own practice, promoting themselves; not collaborating.
4. We recognized value in our senior partners. We wanted to retain their knowledge, wisdom and referral base.

With our firm philosophy in hand we set about drafting firm documents that reflected our philosophy, such as a new Partnership Agreement, Assignment of the Name, Specific Criteria to meet for Partnership, Formal Review forms for Associates.

HIRING ASSOCIATES AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF THAT HAVE THE RIGHT FIT

Before embarking on hiring Associates and Administrative Staff it is important to identify your firm's needs over the next 5 years. Planning is critical prior to hiring, as the cost of recruiting the wrong people or failing to recruit people is too high in today's market place.

When hiring Associates - Things You May Wish to Consider:

- (a) Does the candidate have the skill set or interest in the skill set needed to be successful in your area of the law? Do they like Courtroom work? Are they comfortable with people? Do they have a nice “bedside manner”?