

Do You Hold Regular Meetings with Attorneys and Staff?

Good morning,

My firm is going through an adjustment/transition period. I am trying to find things to suggest that might help facilitate the growth our firm is seeking. One thing that I think would be helpful would be regular meetings (maybe monthly) of the entire firm. Our firm currently consists of 3 partners, myself, and 2 paralegals. I would think that this would help not only make sure that everyone is on the same page regarding goals and expectations, but would allow for everyone to make suggestions.

So I am wondering if anyone out there does this, and if so, do you find it helpful? And what kind things are discussed?

Thanks!

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We have weekly Tuesday morning calls with all attorneys, and bring staff in either for the first 20 minutes, or at least monthly. It helps us focus on pitching opportunities and status updates for pending assignments. Also, if we have any administrative updates, we have them.

We also do weekly pizza or Mexican food too - but that's no work discussions.

Regards,

Murtaza Sutarwalla, Texas

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I do. i'm much smaller than you are (my main firm is just my assistant, my remote assistant and myself) and I have a partnership focusing on another area of practice that just is my partner and I.

With my staff, we do monthly case review meeting and go over ever pending active or potential case and client to make sure no balls are getting dropped, things are moving along as they should, etc.

Periodically, we also meet to discuss firm marketing and related business matter. We also do a pre-vacation meeting anytime any of us go away for more than a few days at a time.

My full-time assistant loves that we do this. Her previous firms never did anything like this and she finds it incredibly helpful, as do I.

Laura S. Mann, New Jersey

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We have staff meetings (everyone) about once monthly. This is mostly about firm, big-picture stuff from my perspective, and I usually have an agenda but we go around the table and all staff can bring up issues, make suggestions, etc. They are very productive and helpful to the firm as a whole. It has led to a number of process changes, and is frankly a good way to roll out changes to pretty much anything - everyone hears it, everyone gives feedback, we can make adjustments based on feedback, etc.

I have tried to institute a weekly attorney/paralegal meeting (without receptionist and other assistant) that is focused on case work and case status. It is great for some paralegals, and not so great with others who despite my pretty explicit instructions miss the point and are not fully prepared to talk about all cases they are working on with me and the other attorneys. I find I have to circle back with one "paralegal" (using the term somewhat loosely at this point) in particular to get what I need from her individually.

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

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I pretty much do as Cynthia does. Everyone groans, but I've also found that if I feed them while we have these meetings, their humor is better. I also find that if everyone has an alphabetized client list to refer to, we each initial who is responsible for the next action and it helps with follow through.

Vicki Levy Eskin, Florida

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Thank you all for the helpful responses! I am hoping my firm will start to meet regularly sometime in the near future.

Brian C. Hagner, Wisconsin

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The various voices in my head are always talking...but before going solo, the firm I worked at (6 attorneys, 3 paralegals, and a general admin) routinely had all hands meetings about every 6 weeks.

The lawyers also met every three weeks or so to cover pending matters, need to help out with matters etc.

I very much appreciated the meetings.

Matthew Johnston

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I am solo with three staff. I find that the more often and more regularly we meet the better the work flows and the lower the stress/chaos level. We strive to meet weekly.

James H. Pardue, North Carolina

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I've worked for two small firms in my career. In each, the attorneys tried to get together for about 15 minutes every afternoon just to discuss what they were working on and to bounce things off of each other or check for conflicts. At my previous firm, we also had a monthly meeting for lawyers and staff with lunch provided.

Very truly yours,

Timothy A. Gutknecht, Illinois

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We have weekly meetings with both attorneys and the paralegal going over the upcoming calendar.

Wendell Finner, Florida

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In my office, I currently have six full-time attorneys supervising projects and two assistants who support admin tasks. I meet with everyone throughout the day and stay on top of their projects (plus, I'm copied on an almost excessive amount of email), but it became clear that they seemed to feel I was being more transparent and that we were working together as a group when I instituted weekly meetings.

The thing is, though, that nothing really new happens in the meetings. We start by covering utilization and project status and then go over major announcements and topics. I try, if there is time, to add 20-30 minutes of group coaching/teaching on a relevant topic. All six of my team members are relatively junior, so the group training has helped to make people more consistent. We also manage a lot of temporary attorneys, so a recurring theme is how to motivate and manage the various issues that come up when you have 200+ temporary workers.

My supervisor, who handles the region, tells me that my internal reviews by my team members shot up considerably after we started the weekly meetings.

I don't love doing them, but the team finds them valuable and we're going to continue doing it until they don't.

Mark Lyon

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When I was a member a small firm, we had weekly team meetings (two attorneys, three staff), go over things that we ask need to say, financials, etc. It was helpful.

Lesley Hoenig, Michigan

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When I was part of a 3-attorney firm, we held Friday a.m. meetings. A big part of our weekly meeting was to keep the others up to date on our cases, go through the checkbook, and pay bills. We rotated custody of the checkbook and bill paying so no one had to manage it single-handed, and in case one of were to get sick or need to be away. We shared the rent and a couple of supply items like toner and cases of paper, but we brought everything with us from our solo gigs.

The meetings weren't long, not very detailed, just formally touching base with each other and keeping on top of the partnership stuff.

CJ Stevens, Montana

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I hold regular meetings, about 4 times a week, with the "boss" aka the wife.

We meet at Starbucks, have a cup of coffee, and spend time NOT PRACTICING LAW. Really, I recommend it.

Jonathan G. Stein, California

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I talk to myself all the time, sometimes even second-guessing myself; having to answer for that is the worst.

Miriam Jacobson, Pennsylvania

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