

**Making the Best With Less:  
Maximizing Your Resources in  
Small to Mid-Size Firms**

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**Smaller Firm Size Can Present  
Opportunities**

- Often less hierarchical
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- Often more flexible
- You know who the decision makers are, and you know them
- You can have personal connections with critical mass of attorneys
- “Family” culture

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**It Can Also Present Special  
Challenges**

- Limited budget
- Limited staffing
- Accountable to multiple people
- Resistance to non-revenue generating functions
- Turnover and turmoil can quickly echo throughout the firm
- “Family” culture

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**Breakout Exercises**

- Professional Development Scenario
- Recruiting Scenario
  - Solutions/Resources
    - Internal ( no or low cost)
    - External (External (\$))



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**Recruiting Exercise**

Your firm is mid-sized with three practice groups. The firm culture is a democratic one where the Recruiting Committee is large and the members are engaged in and committed to a process, which works. The committee consists of associates and partners from all practice areas and levels within the firm. Two of the three practice group leaders work well and cooperatively with the RC in finding quality candidates to join the firm. Hiring for these two groups has been very successful. The third group has a PGL who is a lone wolf who does not feel he needs to abide by the processes of the firm and historically has made his own hiring decisions without involving the RC. This PGL is also the primary client contact for one of the largest and most important clients of the firm and no one is willing to challenge this partner or his methods. The historical result of hiring in his way has been consistent and painful associate turnover within the group.

You have been asked by firm management to make a very important 1-3 year lateral associate hire for this third group. Strategically it is important to bring someone in at this level soon, to assist this important client with their needs. The search parameters are very difficult as there are very few practitioners in the country, which do exactly what this group does. The expectation is that the candidate have stellar academic credentials and solid experience in this very narrow area of the law. The PGL is non-cooperative, bordering on hostile, with you in regards to assisting in the search. Due to cost, the firm is also reluctant to enlist the services of an outside recruiter.



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**Best Practices**



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Professional Development Exercise

You are the Recruiting & Professional Development Director at a 100-lawyer firm. You have the task of creating from scratch a professional development program that focuses specifically on preparing 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> year associates for partnership.

*Firm management recognizes the importance of professional development generally and believes that senior associates could use some formal preparation for partnership. The firm already has in place a decent professional development program that teaches lawyering skills and substantive areas of law. This program is run almost completely in-house by volunteering partners and senior associates. You have a group of 3-4 lawyers who are very interested in training and mentoring associates, and these people are your "go-to" presenters.*

The expectation for the new professional development program is that you will run it like the existing program – in-house and with minimal budget. But the firm's attorneys are under a lot of pressure to bill and develop business, which impacts their interest in and availability to do more associate training. Furthermore, firm management will not micromanage the content of the new program, but there's a tendency to engage in Monday-morning quarterbacking if a program is viewed as ineffective, off-base or too "soft."



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# Best Practices



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## Thank You!



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