ATTORNEY'S REPORT

CPA's report to the legal profession

Scheduling: Are You Giving Associates Their Turn at Bat?

Some unfortunate law firms are hemorrhaging associates in the 30 to 40 percent range — not a pretty picture when you consider the inevitable financial, cultural and client relations hit to the practice. And departing associates are telling their former firms, “It’s not the money. I just wanted my turn at bat.”

Beware the Comfort Trap

It’s no mystery how associates get stuck in a rut. The tendency is to pigeonhole young associates with a particular partner. From a profitability standpoint, it may look good — the associate becomes an expert in that area of law and works efficiently for the partner. But what if that associate actually despises backroom bankruptcy work and desperately wants to try his hand in the courtroom? By not letting him spread his wings, he may very well jump ship to a firm that will.

Batter Up!

It all boils down to proper scheduling of associates onto cases. Here’s how:

Ask and evaluate. Have a clear picture of the skills your associates bring in the door, as well as the skills they want to develop and how they want to grow in the firm.

Schedule strategically. As cases come in, assign the work so that:

- Your associates get the best learning and growth opportunities.

- Your clients get the best representation for their money.

- Your firm enjoys efficient deployment of its resources.

Assign a gatekeeper. In a larger firm, you might call it an “assignment partner.” In a smaller firm, it could be something as simple as a weekly assignment meeting (imagine the juice-and-bagel gathering in the opening scenes of *LA Law*). The goal is to find out who’s busy and who’s not, and what came in and who can staff it.

Contact our office today for a best-practices review of your firm’s scheduling, recruiting and retention procedures.