

Recruiting and Retaining Volunteer Attorneys from Among Solo and Small Firm Practitioners

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Brief Description:

This workshop will address successful approaches in recruiting and retaining volunteer attorneys from among solo and small firms. The panel will present information on reaching solo and small firm attorneys, using technology effectively as a recruitment tool, and identifying and overcoming stumbling blocks. Panelists will also cover how to structure volunteer opportunities to appeal to the interests and concerns of this group, both in terms of substantive areas of law and in terms of the service delivery model.

Topical Outline:

I. Unique Issues

- a. How to reach solo/small firms?
 - i. Not gathered in large groups (firms)
 - ii. No single point person in firms
 - iii. Not so insular as big firm lawyers; creatures of community

- b. What motivates solo/small firms?
 - i. Gain skills to get own clients (vs. big firm: gain procedural skills to advance in firm)
 - ii. Learn substantive law they will apply in their own practice (vs. big firms: procedural skills more important)
 - iii. Qualifying for an LRIS panel
 - iv. Gain experience to help them get a job
 - v. Do good – true out of pocket expense for these folks (vs. big firm: big question is whether and how much it counts towards billables)
 - vi. Connections to facilitate job search, advancement
 - vii. Find a mentor to help develop skills and learn way around
 - viii. Loneliness of solo practice – folks to talk about cases with
 - ix. Social

- c. How to retain solo/small firms?
 - i. Good press= referrals (vs. big firms, good press=stuff to send home to mom, good press for firm)
 - ii. Do good – longtime volunteers motivated by compassionate and justice

- iii. Helping them build a sense of competency
- iv. Not as transitional – even if move from practice to practice, volunteering doesn't change

II. Techniques

- a. How to reach solo/small firms?
 - i. Local legal paper
 - ii. Swearing In Ceremony
 - iii. State Bar info
 - iv. Mailing to recent admittees
 - v. Web – probono.net, sfbare.org
 - vi. Word of mouth
 - vii. Judicial outreach
 - 1. letter
 - 2. in a speech
 - viii. Good press – “volunteer of the month” articles
 - ix. Local and State Bar sections and committees

- b. What motivates solo/small firms?
 - i. Offer introductory training
 - 1. taught by volunteer experts or by staff
 - 2. videotaped so can be shown repeatedly (donated by vendor?)
 - 3. substantive law areas that are favorites of solos and small firms (family law, landlord-tenant, consumer, employment, simple wills/trusts)
 - 4. Manuals
 - 5. Online resources – probono.net
 - 6. Video trainings online like PLI?
 - ii. Offer mentors
 - 1. staff attorneys
 - 2. volunteer experts willing to answer questions
 - 3. match up anxious new lawyers with specific mentor
 - 4. Email resources/bulletin boards/chat rooms
 - 5. sample forms and pleadings online
 - iii. Offer trial experience (select cases; public defender model?)
 - iv. Provide networking opportunities (clinics, social events)
 - v. Offer advanced trainings
 - vi. Volunteer screening – know what each volunteer wants
 - vii. Offer chances to brainstorm
 - 1. brown-bag sessions with volunteer expert and/or staff attorney

- c. How to retain solo/small firms?
 - i. Press, press, press

- ii. Recognition – nominations for awards, certificates, internal awards, chachkes, letters of appreciation from officials and judiciary
- iii. Preferential status on court calendars
- iv. Judicial presence at receptions, parties, coffee hours
- v. Staff attention to and recognition of volunteers
- vi. Advanced trainings
- vii. Networking opportunities
- viii. Social service volunteers/help
- ix. Longevity awards and recognition
- x. Recognition at local bar events