

How to Establish and Maintain Successful Pro Bono Partnerships with Large Firms

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Brief Description:

Do you already have a successful pro bono partnership with large law firms in your service area? If you answer this question with a resounding no, this workshop is for you. Panelists from both sides of the relationship – pro bono program managers and law firm pro bono coordinators – will discuss their strategies for building successful pro bono partnerships from the ground up.

Topical Outline:

- I. Overview of Large Law Firms
 - a. Structure
 - b. Who Makes Decisions?
 - c. Where Does Pro Bono Fit In?

- II. Pro Bono Program Perspective
 - a. Why Should Pro Bono Programs Create Relationships with Large Firms?
 - b. What Types of Barriers Exist in Establishing These Relationships?
 - c. How Should Pro Bono Programs Create Relationships with Large Firms?
 - i. Initial Contact with the Firm
 1. Recruitment letters/email/telephone contact.
 2. Select firm coordinator/contact for pro bono.
 - ii. Firm Questionnaires
 1. Keep a file for each responding firm.
 - a. Include complete list of attorneys & bar numbers.
 - b. Update as necessary.
 2. Maintain contact with each firm coordinator.
 3. Use the questionnaire to customize projects to a firm's area(s) of specialty.
 - iii. Arrange a Firm Project
 1. Participate in an in-house luncheon to explain project
 - a. Bring a judge to the meeting.
 2. Sponsor clinics.
 3. Arrange referrals in areas of expertise or interest.

4. Offer in-house CLE seminars on areas of greatest need.
- iv. Offer Training and Support to Volunteers
 1. Provide training sessions.
 2. Have a volunteer manual and update it as necessary.
 3. Maintain a form bank.
 4. Make program staff available to volunteers for questions.
- v. The Importance of Recognition
 1. Establish an honor roll.
 2. Publish articles about the firm.
 3. Nominate the firm for awards.
 4. Seek firm sponsorship of seminars/clinics/events.

III. Large Law Firm Perspective

- a. The Importance of Public Service to Large Law Firms
 - i. Prominence or greatness as a law firm or a lawyer is about a lot more than just generating revenue.
 - ii. Leading law firms provide intangible institutional commitments to matters of civic, charitable and social responsibility.
 - iii. It is important to clients to hire socially responsible legal counsel.
 - iv. Leading law firms with a concentrated commitment to public service attract the best talent.
- b. Benefits for Attorneys
 - i. Develops lawyers with complete, first class legal skills.
 - ii. Improves quality of life for attorneys and staff.
 - iii. Develops communication and leadership skills.
 - iv. Builds collegiality in offices.
 - v. Helps with retention.
 - vi. Supports recruitment and hiring.
 - vii. Promotes professional development.
 - viii. Earns public recognition for good work.
 - ix. Fulfills professional responsibility obligations.
- c. Large Law Firm Goals
 - i. Need to create more awareness of good work.
 - ii. Need to secure “best practices.”
 - iii. Need to generate opportunities for lawyers to develop skills through legal work.
 - iv. Need to consider how pro bono works with community service efforts.
 1. Examples of fitting pro bono in with other community service opportunities.
 - v. Need to consider other firm priorities (such as professional development, diversity and hiring/recruitment).
 1. Examples of combining pro bono and professional development.
- d. The Role of Community Expectations
 - i. The ABA recommends committing 3% of the firm’s time to pro bono.

- ii. Every major law firm is ranked and evaluated annually according to its pro bono commitment in the American Lawyer and the National Law Journal.
- e. Large Firm Pro Bono and Public Service Mission Statements
 - i. Baker & McKenzie Example:
 - 1. “To deliver first class legal services to the underserved and disadvantaged by fostering an environment which encourages, promotes, and supports public service.”
 - 2. “To promote and sponsor activities which provide opportunities for all firm personnel to contribute to the well-being of the communities in which we live and practice.”
 - f. Simple Steps to Starting Relationships with Large Firms:
 - i. Think slow and gradual;
 - ii. Develop bite-sized projects;
 - iii. Embrace small victories;
 - iv. Incorporate summer associates and new hires;
 - v. Consider projects that involve more than one office;
 - vi. Sell training and skill development;
 - vii. Discuss public recognition; and
 - viii. Sell on professional responsibility obligations.

IV. Additional Routes to Pro Bono Partnerships

- a. Bar Associations
- b. Judges
- c. Other Entities

V. Maintaining Successful Relationships Between Pro Bono Programs and Large Law Firms