

Recent Success Story -McLane's 3.8 Plan

McLane, Graf, Raulerson & Middleton, P.A.

New Hampshire

SITUATION: In October 2005, the McLane Law Firm's Management Committee announced they wanted to grow total billable hours at least 3.8% over the previous year.

GOAL: To help the firm attain the 3.8% growth objective. The firm's C.E.O., marketing staff and outside consultant created a combined marketing, business development and client service program and named it the "3.8% Plan." The target internal audiences for the Plan were all McLane attorneys and staff. External targets were the firm's best clients and contacts.

OBSTACLES: Due to the relatively flat growth in U.S. legal market in 2005, the slow-growth economy in the U.S. and New England region, lawyers' natural tendencies to act independently of any organized program and to be naturally skeptical, the "3.8 Plan" had its doubters. So, it was decided to focus on what worked in the past to motivate lawyers and what works to develop business most efficiently – direct, one-to-one communications with lawyers as a group and individually, and with clients, contacts and referral sources. Internal research was conducted to identify the firm's main clients and referral sources over the past three to five years, especially those with potential to do more work.

IMPLEMENTATION: The "3.8 Plan" was formally launched November 2005 at the firm's annual, all-Director retreat. One key to success of the "3.8 Plan" was the leadership that the firm's Management Committee and C.E.O displayed by taking ownership of marketing, business development and client service as the primary drivers of the plan. This top-down commitment and buy-in minimized questioning/second guessing about whether the plan was necessary or would work. Instead a 3.8 stake was clearly "driven into the ground" by firm leadership, which announced firm-wide that a 3.8% increase in billable hours was the growth goal for everyone.

The "3.8 Plan" was a new way to encourage firm growth using a 'package' of tried-and-true communication tools. For example, at the retreat where the plan was launched, peer involvement was used to set clear expectations, personal ownership and responsibility for the Plan's success. During the retreat, the firm's Directors each listed three to five of their key clients/referral sources from whom they could get additional work. At the retreat, the outside consultant provided step-by-step detail on how to engage in productive one-to-one communications with those contacts. Working in groups, the Directors drafted specific action plans that were tallied, tracked, implemented and updated throughout 2006 with coaching assistance from the firm's marketers and outside consultant. A 'sales pipeline' was created to track progress. "3.8 Plan" follow-up was also conducted by practice group and client team leaders at regular meetings. In addition, at monthly all-attorney luncheons, updates and training was provided. Recognition and reward was built into the firm's monthly all Director meetings, with at least 15 minutes devoted to a report on progress to-date, recent activities, results and highlights. To visually support the "3.8 Plan" and its' progress, firm staff members created a "3.8 Plan" Scoreboard, which posted the monthly results, baseball-style for all to see.

RESULTS: The McLane Law Firm's 3.8 Plan - which was launched November 2005 with follow-up throughout 2006 - resulted in November 2006 of total annual growth of 11.5% (triple the original goal of 3.8% - while maintaining 2005 realization rates with no lateral hires). Other results include:

1. Enhanced firm wide morale, firm spirit and team work.
2. Increased Director motivation, buy-in and participation in marketing, business development and client service efforts and increased, strategic use of the firm's marketing department's resources.
3. Increased focus and time investment on what works to generate business – direct, one-to-one client/contact communications.

BUDGET: Not including attorney time invested in the “3.8 Plan” efforts or the annual salaries for the McLane staff members who directed the project, approximately \$36,000 was spent on an [outside consultant.](#)

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