

Law Firm Talent Strategy: 20 Questions Law Firm Leaders Need to Ask in 2013

By [LawVision](#) on January 29, 2013

When I ask law firm leaders about their talent strategy, I often get the response, “You mean our recruiting?” or “You mean our professional development?” Going into 2013 without a firm understanding of talent strategy makes as much sense as the Harbaugh brothers coaching the Super Bowl without a playbook. So what, exactly, is “talent strategy”?

Talent strategy is deliberately choosing a set of activities that align a firm's most valuable resource – it's people – to create a competitive advantage.

“Talent” refers to every individual employed at a law firm- not just the lawyers. Here are 20 questions law firm leaders need to ask in 2013 to begin integrating talent strategy as a component of their firm’s overall strategic vision:

Recruitment, Hiring & Onboarding

1. Has the firm conducted a sufficient analysis of internal human capital (roles, functions, locations, emerging talent demands, expected turnover and vacancies)?
2. Does the firm have an accurate assessment of future client demand and the talent required to meet those needs?
3. Does the firm have a competitive and clearly defined answer to the question “Why should I work here?”
4. Is the firm’s interview process objective and aligned with its strategic objectives?
5. Does the firm have an effective, uniform onboarding process for new hires that uses metrics to track performance?

Staffing

1. Does the need exist for alternative staffing structures, and if so, are they maximizing value and delivering cost savings to clients?
2. Do the firm’s work structures optimize productivity, innovation and efficiency?

Performance Management

1. Does the firm’s performance review process and promote accountability, continuous improvement and behaviors that promote firm goals?
2. Does the firm have realistic and challenging performance goals, including requirements for billable hours and investment time?

Professional Development

1. Do the firm’s associates receive adequate coaching, mentoring, and/or sponsorship?
2. Do the firm’s lawyers receive adequate training on business development, practice management and the business of law?

Partnership

1. Are partnership expectations clearly communicated to associates and partners?
2. Do new partners have strategic personal plans to help them understand and surpass ownership expectations?
3. Does the firm skillfully and effectively address instances where lawyers no longer satisfy the firm's partnership requirements?

Succession Planning

1. Does the firm effectively develop high potential future lawyers for the next level of their career?
2. Does the firm have a clear succession planning process/protocol in place?

Retention, Motivation & Engagement

1. Does the firm examine, understand and deliver, within reason, what lawyers want from their firm and work environment?
2. Does the firm solicit regular feedback from lawyers about retention, satisfaction and engagement (i.e. via interviews, surveys and focus groups)?
3. Is compensation reflective of fair market value and competitive relative to peer firms?
4. Does the firm meaningfully engage with alumni?

Unlike in the Super Bowl, there are no "Hail Mary" passes or shortcuts to developing a competitive talent advantage, but asking these questions is the first step toward developing a comprehensive talent strategy that will position your firm for success in 2013 and well beyond.