

June / July 2019
Vol. 2019, No. 3

HUMAN RESOURCES



YOUR JUNE / JULY ISSUE OF *THE VERDICT* IS NOW AVAILABLE!

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President's Column

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Employees Are Your
Most Important Clients

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Work-Life Integration
Benefits

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ALAMN Has Adopted ALA's Mission Statement

To improve the quality of management in legal services organizations; promote and enhance the competence and professionalism of legal administrators and all members of the management team; and represent professional legal management and managers to the legal community and to the community at large.

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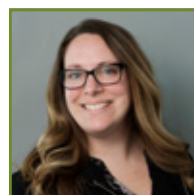
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KNOW YOUR LEGAL JARGON

Ab Initio – Latin for “from the beginning”

Often used to indicate the time a policy or contract becomes legal. E.g., “Medical expenses were covered *ab initio* by the health care policy.” *Void ab initio* would mean a policy or contract was null from the beginning; one that seriously offends law or public policy.



ALAMN COMMITTEES & SIGs

ALAMN COMMITTEES serve as liaisons between membership and the respective director, representing the **ALAMN** Board of Directors.

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ALAMN SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs) are educational forums specific to functional specialty. Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting attendees need not be **ALAMN** members.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Jessica Gerhardson



As leaders in our organizations, we have all learned to remain calm under pressure and realize when things may be out of our control. Level heads can prevent stressful situations from getting worse. So, when the Texas weather delayed and cancelled flights

for many traveling to the ALA Annual Conference and Expo in Grapevine, Texas, the 17+ stranded ALAMN chapter members and 1 awesome business partner took this hiccup in stride. We turned what could have been a terrible day of uncertainty and stress into a lovely day of networking at the best airport in the country. Although we arrived a little later than planned, we jumped right into the conference experience.

The ALAMN President's reception was held at Corky's Gaming Bistro in Grapevine. Brave members from Minnesota, the Mexico Chapter, and the ALA Board of Directors showcased their axe throwing skills. I am pleased to report that there were no bodily injuries sustained, although there may have been some injured pride. It was harder than it looks! Thank you to everyone who attended the event, despite the weather. It made me so happy to see everyone having fun after a long day of travel. Our light-up cowboy hats were a hit with our fellow attendees, and some of the Texas chapter members offered to buy the hats from us. I think the North Star State represented itself well in the Lone Star State.

There were 29 Minnesota attendees at this year's ALA conference, and there were over 1,000 attendees overall. ALA offered a tremendous amount of educational opportunities in different tracks depending on function area and years of experience. This year, they also introduced a "Mind, Body, Spirit" initiative so attendees could strike a balance between career and health. There were countless opportunities to network with fellow Minnesota members as well as other attendees from around the world.

Of all of the sessions I attended at the conference, Judy Hissong, CLM's was one my favorites. Many of you had the opportunity to see Judy speak at the ALAMN Annual Conference in February. She is always fantastic, but her new presentation on the power of mindfulness was so interesting. I always had a very abstract view of what it meant to be mindful, but she broke it down and explained the benefits to make it approachable. Whether it's taking a minute at the end of the day to write down 3 things that brought you joy, getting a massage, or just setting aside a few moments of quiet meditation, practicing intentional mindfulness increases your productivity and your overall wellbeing. I know I plan to implement some of her suggestions into my normal routine!

If you have not had a chance to attend an ALA Conference in the past, I highly encourage you to attend one in the future. The 2020 conference will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah from May 3 through May 6. Save the date! The Minnesota Chapter offers multiple scholarships throughout the year to help with the cost of attending an ALA conference, including a number of scholarships available for leaders of committees and SIGs as well as scholarships that require application and nomination. Watch for more information this year on how you may apply for or nominate someone for these scholarships.

For education and networking closer to home, please check the ALAMN calendar for all of the meetings and events we have planned for you! I look forward to seeing everyone at the ALAMN Summer Social on Thursday, July 18th, at the Golden Valley Country Club.



ALAMN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JUNE 2019

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

***PLEASE NOTE:**
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG) attendees need not be ALAMN members

JULY 2019

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

- 4 Education and Conference Committee Meeting**
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
Felhaber Larson
- 5 Large Firm Administrator Meeting**
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
Foley & Mansfield
- 11 General Meeting – Two Questions Will Save Us All**
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
Winthrop & Weinstine
- 18 Facilities Management SIG***
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
Fredrikson & Byron
- 19 Diversity & Inclusion Committee Meeting**
8:30 AM – 9:30 AM
Bowman & Brooke

- 19 Community Service – Simpson Shelter Meal**
5:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Simpson United Methodist Church (basement)
2740 – 1st Avenue S, Minneapolis
- 20 Small/Medium Firm Committee Meeting**
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
Town and Country Club, St. Paul
- 25 Membership Development Committee Meeting**
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Henson & Efron
- 26 Business Partner Relations Committee Meeting**
8:30 AM – 9:30 AM
Madigan Dahl & Harlan

- 2 HR Committee Meeting**
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
Messerli Kramer
- 11 Financial Management SIG***
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
TBD
- 18 Community Service Committee Meeting**
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
MSBA/HCBA/RCBA
- 18 2019 ALAMN Summer Social**
4:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Golden Valley Country Club
- 23 Business Partner Relations Committee Meeting**
9:30 AM – 10:30 AM
Madigan Dahl & Harlan

2019 ALAMN

SUMMER SOCIAL

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Enjoy visiting ALAMN business partners and members. Partake in refreshing drinks and fun foods!

REGISTER NOW @ WWW.ALA-MN.ORG

THURSDAY, JULY 18TH, 2019

4:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Golden Valley Country Club
7001 Golden Valley Road



GENERAL MEETING



Former **ALAMN** President Sarah Evenson presented on Employee Engagement at the May General Meeting hosted by Robins Kaplan. She told the story of her ongoing journey to improve engagement at Barnes & Thornburg and shared many of her successes with us.

There's no magic potion when it comes to employee engagement, she said, but at the crux of it are five principles:

1. Clear and compelling direction;
2. Open and honest communication;
3. Empowering employees to develop their careers;
4. Recognizing and rewarding high performance; and
5. Providing benefits that are important to employees.

Thank you, Sarah, for sharing some of your wisdom with us!

Please join us at the next **ALAMN** General Meeting:

TWO QUESTIONS WILL SAVE US ALL

Presented by Kate Bischoff, SHRM-SCP

What if we asked our people two questions that got at employee engagement, performance management, FMLA concerns, and many other issues? What if they got our people to trust us? What if they would bring us problems if they asked them? These magic questions exist. They are easy to ask. Everyone understands them. Everyone will answer them if we ask them genuinely. So, why don't we ask them? What would change our behavior to start asking?

Tuesday, June 11, 2019

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Winthrop & Weinstine
225 S 6th Street, Suite 3600

Register Now @ www.ala-mn.org



And the next ALAMN Shining Star is...

The Board is pleased to announce the selection of Samantha Tschida as a Shining Star for the Minnesota Chapter! Samantha, a Human Resources professional at Arthur Chapman Kettering Smetak & Pikala PA joined **ALAMN** in February 2018 and has gotten involved with the Chapter quickly. Samantha attended her first national ALA Conference this year. She is the current Communications Coordinator for **ALAMN** and is also a member of the Human Resources Committee, the Young Professionals Group, and the Small & Medium

Group. Samantha enthusiastically jumped into the Communications Coordinator role and conducted website training at the recent Leadership Orientation without a hitch! Samantha's commitment and contributions to **ALAMN** are greatly appreciated!

2019 ALAMN COMPENSATION SURVEY

ALAMN administers an annual survey to collect data on salaries and benefits* paid to employees in private law firms, corporate law departments, and governmental legal departments in Minnesota. This data is tabulated by an independent third party. The survey assists members in administering salaries and benefits within their organizations.

- June 3, 2019 Survey Launches
- June 21, 2019 Early-Bird Pricing Ends
- June 28, 2019 Survey Closes
- September 10, 2019 Survey Results Presented

We encourage and appreciate your participation!

Find out more @ www.ala-mn/salary-survey or contact the Compensation Survey Committee co-chairs: Jodi Schmidt at jodi.schmidt@gpmlaw.com or Tammy Warren at twarren@fredlaw.com

**benefits surveyed intermittently*



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ANNUAL CAREER FAIR

The Diversity & Inclusion Committee held the fifth annual **ALAMN** Career Fair for high school students on Friday, April 12th, at Robins Kaplan. Students from Hiawatha Academies, Patrick Henry and Southwest High Schools attended this year. Students were able to visit 13 tables showcasing various jobs available in law firms. They also had the opportunity to have a mock interview, and 90% of the students participated! Feedback from the school coordinators included, "The students told me they really liked the fair and feel like they have a better understanding of how a law firm operates!" Thanks go out to all the volunteers as well as to the firms and business partners who donated swag and gift cards. This year, **ALAMN** also granted a \$2,000 diversity scholarship, which was awarded to an applicant from Como Park Senior High School. The committee looks forward to another successful career fair in 2020!



If you would like to learn more about or join the Diversity & Inclusion Committee, please contact Carlene Holter at carlene.holter@bowmanandbrooke.com or Terri Stewart at tstewart@felhaber.com. Please refer to the **ALAMN** calendar for upcoming meetings. All **ALAMN** members are welcome!



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BENEFITS OF CLM

WHAT IS CLM?

ALA's Certified Legal Manager (CLM) program provides the opportunity to demonstrate you have mastered the knowledge, skills, and abilities to operate at a high level of expertise in the field of legal management.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BECOME CERTIFIED?

To become certified, ALA members or nonmembers must meet the eligibility requirements and pass the certification examination given by the Association of Legal Administrators. While legal administrators in Canada and other countries are eligible to become certified, major portions of the examination are based on U.S. federal law.

A complete list of ALAMN members who have earned the CLM Designation can be [found here](#).



On Your Way to Certification

ALA offers many ways to prepare for aspiring CLMs – a brand new **Study Guide for the CLM Exam**, a webinar bundle and more!



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PLEASE WELCOME OUR NEWEST ALAMN MEMBERS

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Nancy Schultz

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Fredrikson & Byron

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Administrator

Jardine Logan & O'Brien



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TODAY**

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT | COOKIE CART

On Wednesday, May 8, 2019, ALAMN members and business partners braved the cold spring rain and had a great time getting to know and working alongside the teen employees at the Cookie Cart bakery, located at 1119 W. Broadway Avenue in Minneapolis.

Cookie Cart was started in 1988 by Sister Jean as a safe, secure and engaging space for North Minneapolis' youth. She saw the need to engage the neighborhood's young people in educational and empowering activities.

ALAMN's gift of volunteer hours not only helped lighten their daily workload but also gave the youth a chance to practice their interpersonal skills by chatting with the diverse members of our group. The conversations

went both ways: we learned about their current obstacles, desires and plans for their futures, and they were able to ask us about our dreams, passions, barriers, opportunities and successes along our career paths.

The bakery teaches essential employment skills: managing work schedules, taking direction from supervisors, efficient task completion, and other problem-solving skills. The classroom program includes customer service training, mock interviews, resume and cover letter writing, and financial literacy training.

Thank you to our volunteers who helped in both the bakery and in the mock interview classroom with the teen employees. It meant a lot!

- Claudett McCune – Coordinated Business Systems*
- Jonathan Olson – Ricoh
- Kristofer Poppe – Ricoh
- Kelly Marsh – First Choice Services
- Jack Duffy – Gallagher
- Dan Leavitt – Loffler Companies
- Gregg Eastin – Loffler Companies
- Stacy & Laila Locsin – Patterson Thuente
- Bret Roberts – Presidio
- Marina Novakovic – PS Companies
- Denise Lynch – Special Counsel
- Steph Unterberger – Special Counsel
- Deb Busch – USI Insurance Services
- Gayle Zabel – Innovative Office Solutions
- Janet Tschida - Innovative Office Solutions*
- Marie Conway – Innovative Office Solutions
- Deb O'Conner, CLM – Anastasi Jellum
- Pat Stender – Cousineau Van Bergen McNee & Malone
- Caitlin Neidzwiecki – Foley & Mansfield
- Sheila Johnson – Hennepin County Bar Association*
- Tracy Smith – Smith Gendler Shiell Sheff Ford & Maher
- Norma Thayer - Zimmerman Reed

**Thank you also to those who helped fill Cookie Cart's emergency pantry with paper, pens, notebooks, socks, toothpaste, toothbrushes, floss, deodorant, shampoo, razors, soap, tampons, lip balm, blankets and many snacks!*



If you want to join in on the fun, the next Community Service event will be a BBQ at the Simpson Shelter on Wednesday, June 19, 2019, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Volunteers are needed to prepare and serve guests. If grilling is your specialty, this is a great opportunity to showcase your skills! If it isn't, help is needed to prepare the side dishes and dessert, and serve a delicious meal to guests.

All are welcome to sign up today!

Please contact Cheryl Nelson, CLM, at cnelson@robinskaplan.com or 612.349.0806 for more details.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT | COOKIE CART



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EMPLOYEES ARE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT CLIENTS

By Caitlin C. Niedzwiecki, PHR



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Employees are your most important clients. This is one of the mantras I live by when I'm at work. Too often we get so caught up in the other priorities that dominate our day-to-day activities – software upgrades, recruiting needs, resolving conflict, facilities issues – that we forget about the foundation of our firms: THE PEOPLE! In order to keep our businesses running smoothly, we need to make sure employees' needs are being met and, in turn, it's crucial that employees feel they are providing something valuable to their employer. The following are some ideas for how we can achieve these goals.

Make Yourself Available

Whether it's doing the daily walk around the office to say good morning to everyone or simply having an open-door policy where people feel like they can stop in any time of day, it's vital that we make ourselves available to the people we support. My door is almost always open, and I like to think that employees feel pretty comfortable coming to me, but here's where I fall short (and I'm sure others will relate): when I'm right in the middle of a task and I find someone standing at my door with a question or concern, I have a really hard time shifting gears on the spot. I have to challenge myself to set aside what I was doing, invite them into my office, and redirect my mental energy. Have you ever had an important conversation come out of one of these moments and thought, "thank goodness I made time for that!?" I know I have.

Ask Questions and Listen

Listening seems simple, right? And yet so many of us struggle with it! In one-on-one interactions I often let my own thoughts creep in, instead of focusing on the person speaking. This is where self-awareness can work wonders – if you catch your mind getting off track while listening to someone, acknowledge that feeling and then refocus your attention. This refocusing process only takes a millisecond and suddenly you are back on track.

The other difficult task is knowing how to ask the "right" questions – those magic questions that get employees to speak up about their issues. Generic questions like "What's up?" or "What's new?" always seem to end in a response of "not much." The questions you pose to employees need to feel more personal. Ideally you should be building on the information you already know: "How are things going with the new document management software? ... How did your conversation with (fill in name) go? ... How is your (mom/brother/dog) doing?" And when it comes to open-ended questions consider this one: "Is there anything you want to share with me?" The first time you pose this question you might only get a small nugget of information, but as trust builds over time employees will feel like they can come to you with anything and everything.

[continued on page 15]

EMPLOYEES ARE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT CLIENTS

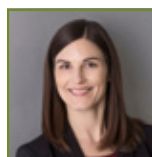
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Give and Receive Feedback Often

Have you ever written a review for a product or a business? Why does it seem like people are more likely to write a review if they have a strong negative opinion rather than a positive one? Unfortunately, this same trend occurs in the workplace. We don't often tell people what a great job they are doing outside of annual performance review time. Sometimes we take the time to say thanks, which is nice, but we stop short of giving specific and timely feedback. Imagine if we gave employees feedback on a weekly basis. Wouldn't everyone have a better sense of their worth to the business? Plus, the more often you provide positive feedback, the easier it will be to give negative feedback when you need to. You might even take it one step further by asking the people you manage to provide feedback on how you're doing. When given

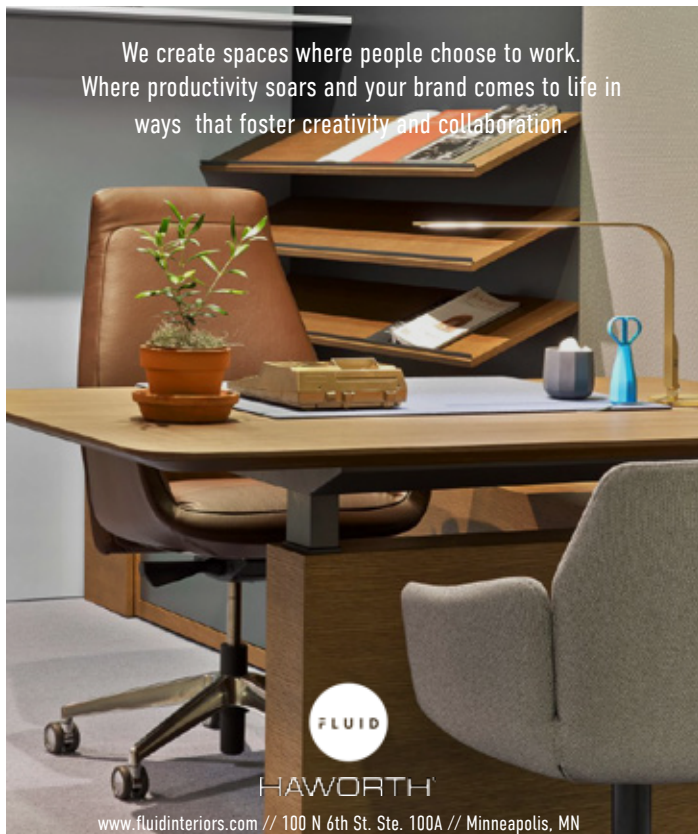
the opportunity to provide feedback, employees feel like their opinion matters and they are more likely to be engaged.

It's true that a law firm will not survive without its clients, but a firm cannot even begin to run without its employees. Prioritizing our employees' interests and needs is well worth the investment of time and energy that we put into it.



About the Author:

Caitlin C. Niedzwiecki, PHR, is a Human Resources Generalist at Foley & Mansfield and is presently the ALAMN Education Director. Since joining ALAMN in 2017, Caitlin has served as a co-chair of the Education Committee and been an active member of both the Diversity & Inclusion and Business Partner Relations Committees.



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WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION BENEFITS: KEY TOOLS FOR EMPLOYEE ATTRACTION, RETENTION AND WELL-BEING

By Joy Burton, Nicky Jones-Gyllstrom, and Rebecca Kruske, Gallagher

Technology has stretched the traditional “9 to 5” workday to “8 to 6” or even “7 to 7” and beyond. Tasked with managing a constant information stream, employees don’t always log out for the day when they go home. Instead, they may respond to emails while the microwave cooks dinner or get a jump on work tasks while the morning coffee brews.

This new normal can help move business along, but it can also lead to employee burnout. That’s why, regardless of their culture, employers should offer resources that protect employees’ personal lives while providing technology that optimizes workplace flexibility.

Technology Brings Flexibility and Stress

Gallup’s 2017 State of the American Workplace report confirms that flexible scheduling and work-from-home opportunities are very attractive to employees – so much so that 51% would change their current job for one that offered flextime.¹ Although employees welcome the flexibility that technology brings to their lives, they endure more stress because of the connectivity.

According to a 2015 study, 65% of U.S. employees identify work as their top stressor. And two contributors to that stress are long hours and work-family conflict.² It’s no surprise, then, that employees are interested in finding middle ground between their professional and personal lives. When considering a new job, 53% say a role that allows them greater work-life balance and better personal well-being is very important.³

Employers have good reason to consider and enact flexible scheduling and work-from-home policies that help employees find their balancing point. Employees who work remotely on some days – but not all – are more engaged than those who always work in the office.⁴

Purpose-driven support for work-life integration helps deliver better results. Busy decision makers looking to roll out resources to employees must resist automatically following the latest trend. Because no single solution is

equally effective for all needs, employers should offer options that reflect the specific characteristics of their workforce and culture.

Take a Cue from Generational Differences

Each employee has a unique take on what work-life integration should be, but employers can find common themes within each generation of workers. This is important to keep in mind as U.S. workforces grow more age diverse.

Consider the high-tech industry. Many employers famously offer amenities to keep employees on campus so they can comfortably spend more time on the job. However, one company that took this approach found itself losing experienced Gen-X talent that was needed to provide leadership to a younger workforce. An analysis showed their campus amenities appealed to millennials but backfired with older workers. Gen-Xers wanted to go home to their families. When that desire clashed with the company culture, they found new jobs.

Multiple tactics support healthy work-life integration. Some are more traditional and others are more avant garde – from tuition reimbursement and parental leave, to sabbaticals and even paying workaholic employees to take a vacation. A 2017 survey identified a few of the well-being options offered by employers to help employees effectively integrate work with other aspects of their lives. What’s critical is choosing a mix of resources that reflects the diversity of the workforce.

PROMOTING HEALTHY WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION ⁵

Tactic	Use
Lactation and nursing mothers’ rooms	39%
Financial wellbeing opportunities	34%
Community engagement opportunities	27%
Social wellbeing initiatives	18%
Onsite wellbeing or meditation rooms	9%

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WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION BENEFITS: KEY TOOLS FOR EMPLOYEE ATTRACTION, RETENTION AND WELL-BEING

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Employers can more effectively customize work-life integration to their culture by determining exactly what they want to achieve. A well-being assessment should provide useful insights, including an audit of work-life integration resources through methods like stakeholder focus groups or interviews. The goals are to understand the needs and wants of employees, determine the value of currently offered resources, and identify any silos to dismantle. With clear answers from this discovery process, employers are better able to see what they're already achieving and where gaps and opportunities exist.

The Right Value Proposition Sets the Stage for Successful Hiring and Retention

An employer value proposition is a cornerstone in aiding the physical and emotional well-being of current and future employees. This summary of cultural attributes – that helps set expectations for the employee experience – should communicate a distinct commitment to work-life integration. Value proposition attributes will vary. For example, the interest of investment bank employees and job seekers may be very different from the interests of those who work for, or want to work for, an environmentally-focused manufacturer.

When a value proposition is stated during the interview process, job candidates will understand what kind of organization the employer is and how work-life integration will be affected. It then becomes the employer's challenge to follow through on the inherent promises, understanding that work-life integration is a key component of talent retention. To the extent that they succeed, they establish a brand reputation as a destination employer and set themselves apart from their competitors.

The fact is, employees bring their whole selves to work. So it's wise for employers to foster a culture that wholly supports the dreams, goals, and endeavors of their workforce – whether work related or personal – because both realms are intertwined. The quality of health and well-being in one affects the quality of health and well-being in the other.

And work-life integration helps drive the best outcomes 24/7. Building a culture that supports work-life integration requires a good grasp of workforce demographics, tactics that create an appealing environment for each segment, and clearly communicating what employees can expect from their employer. An ongoing commitment to these efforts is the essential winning move for attracting and retaining the right employees – by maintaining a healthy environment for their well-being.



About the Authors:

Joy Burton, Senior Wellbeing & Engagement Consultant, Gallagher Great Lakes Region, helps clients build best-in-class, multi-year wellbeing and engagement strategies that offer innovative, results-based solutions. She specializes in developing integrated strategies that improve employee engagement and has broad experience in employee benefits and healthcare.



Nicky Jones-Gyllstrom, Global Managing Director, Gallagher Equity and M&A Advisors (GEMAA), leads her industry practice teams in delivering value to clients throughout their M&A life cycle. Her expertise in due diligence, new client transition, integration and harmonization strategy, M&A and divestiture readiness and private equity aggregation solutions has resulted in significant savings and value creation.



Rebecca Kruske, Area Vice-President & Practice Leader, Wellbeing & Engagement, Gallagher Western Region, supports clients and Gallagher team members alike in developing holistic strategies centered on individual wellbeing and organizational health. She specializes in providing tailored solutions that enhance the employee experience and tie back to the organization's values and goals.

¹ Gallup, Inc., "State of the American Workplace," 2017

² American Heart Association, "Resilience in the Workplace: An Evidence Review and Implications for Practice," October 2017

³ Gallup

⁴ Gallup

⁵ Arthur J. Gallagher & Co., "Benefits Strategy & Benchmarking Survey— Executive Summary," 2017

DEAR LAURA

"We all want to attract and retain the best talent for servicing our clients. Yet, understanding the elevated risk for mental health and substance use disorders in the legal community, how can legal organizations begin to promote well-being and avoid contributing to chronic stress, sleep deprivation, and burnout?"

*Signed,
Talent Development Manager, Twin Cities*

What a timely question! First, because last month was Mental Health Awareness Month, which we have observed each May in the United States for 70 years. Moreover, it is timely because law firms and legal organizations are finally thinking and talking about mental health thanks to the ABA Well-Being Pledge. The ABA instituted the Pledge in 2018 after publishing results from a 2016 study of 13,000 practicing attorneys, conducted in collaboration with the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation. The study found that attorneys have an elevated risk for mental health and substance use disorders.

This study excluded all other legal professionals, such as those in our positions who are responsible for managing and leading law firms, as well as the employees who support attorneys and our clients. I suspect this elevated risk exists not solely for attorneys, but for all employees in legal. As it were, studies show that 20-25 percent of adults in the United States experience mental illness in a given year. So, it is certainly time to focus on the well-being of everyone in our offices, and we are in a great position to help!

My firm signed the ABA Well-Being Pledge in 2018, and we are committed to focusing on well-being for all members of our community. The Pledge includes an 8-step action plan for legal employers, and a well-being toolkit complements the Pledge. Most of the key information can be found on the ABA or Minnesota Courts website. Earlier this year, I attended the Pledge Kick-off meeting in Chicago, and there were many great ideas shared amongst the attendees. Many of these ideas focused on wellness activities and modifications

in the office, such as afternoon walking groups, installing sit-to-stand desks, bringing in a chair massage therapist, adding healthy snacks, and coordinating speakers on nutrition. Others talked about conducting workshops on resiliency and/or mindfulness. In my small group, we admitted there was too much focus on alcohol at firm functions, and we discussed alternatives to the standard firm happy hour.

As mentioned above, 20-25 percent of adults experience mental illness, yet more than half of those adults do not receive mental health services. Why? Because there is stigma associated with talking about mental illness, including chemical dependency. But it is time for us to break the silence! We need to make our work environments safe. A few years ago, our firm had a "conversation" about mental health. One attorney talked about his daughter's battle with an eating order. An LAA talked about her mother's struggle with severe paranoia. I talked about my daughter's challenge with depression and anxiety. A few talked about their own personal struggles. Was it comfortable for everyone? No, but it created the space needed to start more conversations. Our folks felt safe. We were saying to everyone, "We're here for you. You are not alone."

Another important part of helping your firm be a healthier place is by focusing on being a Servant Leader. When people make mistakes, instead of making assumptions, ask questions. If a quality LAA starts coming in late, don't just get angry. Instead, ask her how she is doing. Is everything ok? Is there something I can do to help?

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DEAR LAURA

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An article in the Harvard Business Review, entitled “5 Ways Bosses Can Reduce the Stigma of Mental Health at Work,” discusses ways to drive a more empathetic culture, a key component of being a servant leader. The five suggestions are:

- Pay attention to language. We sometimes perpetuate mental health stigma by what we say. Do not say things like “Mr. OCD is at it again—organizing everything.” And, please speak up when other colleagues make inappropriate remarks.
- Rethink “sick days.” Days off to focus on mental health are equally important as physical health—maybe more so.
- Encourage open and honest conversations. Don’t judge.
- Be proactive. Try to eliminate prolonged unmanageable stress in the office.
- Train people to notice and respond. Many of us have offered CPR classes. It’s now time to train in Mental Health First Aid.

The more we can do to eliminate the stigma and speak openly, honestly, and vulnerably about mental health, the healthier we will all be. It takes just one person to stand up and make a change, and others will follow. Let’s all work to break the silence!

Lawyer Well-Being resources available at:
www.mncourts.gov/lawyer-well-being.aspx



About the Author:

Laura J. Broomell, CLM, is the COO at Greene Espel PLLP. She served as the 2016-17 ALA President and has contributed to numerous ALA and ALAMN committees during her 30+ years as an ALA member. Rich with experience in the legal industry and in ALA, Laura has become the ALAMN de facto go-to person for advice of all kinds. Leading by example, she strives to educate all legal professionals to be diplomatic problem-solvers.

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GET TO KNOW YOUR ALAMN BOARD

What lesson(s) did you learn from your first job?

Jessica Gerhardson, President

My first job was working at Walt Disney World in the Entertainment department (performing in parades and shows and greeting guests). It was an incredible job, and I feel very fortunate to count that as my first. I learned so much from my experience there that I still draw from today, but I think the most important one is extending kindness to everyone you meet. You never know what kind of day/week/year they've had, and an interaction with you can totally change their day for the better. That job also taught me how to avoid heat stroke during Florida summers, which is also pretty valuable information.

Kelly Thaemert, CLM, President-Elect

I definitely learned a lot about customer service. I waitressed at a small café in Mayer, MN. I was the only waitress on Saturdays from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Abby Rooney, PHR, SHRM-CP, Past President

My first job was at Burger King. I learned the importance of communicating with a manager about my schedule. It was important to speak up if I wanted to have a particular day off, or to let them know that I wanted more hours over the summer. Communication is important no matter the role or company.

Tracy Overson, CLM, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, C(k)PF, Administrative Director

During my first job as a cashier at a grocery store, I learned the importance of having a good sense of humor and how that assists in building relationships. Most people don't like grocery shopping, especially when it comes to paying for a cartful of groceries! Keeping things on the lighter side takes the stress out of a not so fun task and builds camaraderie.

Nick Manty, Communications Director

My first job was being a prep cook (I made salads) when I was 16. A lesson I first learned then, and am still learning now, is to leave work at work.

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ALA's 2019

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GET TO KNOW YOUR ALAMN BOARD

What lesson(s) did you learn from your first job?

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Caitlin Niedzwiecki, PHR, Education Director

My first real job was working in the administrative office at a nursing home. I learned the importance of asking questions and showing initiative. I was a painfully shy 17-year-old at the time, waiting around for my supervisor to tell me what to do!

Kim Pepera, Finance Director

My first job was delivering newspapers once a week when I was in 7th grade. I did three routes myself and learned very quickly that the routes in apartment buildings were the way to go. I could make three times the cash in a fraction of the time. My earnings went to buy my first horse so I learned the value of saving for something I wanted at an early age. I still love to count money and have a goal!

Jessica Johnson, Membership Director

My first job was as a receptionist at a salon. One of the most important lessons I learned was how important communication is – communicating with not only my supervisors, but other employees and most importantly the customers. All forms of communication are vital, from body language to facial expressions to tone of voice.

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