



LAW FIRMS

Going Big

Bucking trends, some firms expand and revamp offices to lure back remote and hybrid workers

BY JUNE BELL

While Lowenstein Sandler's attorneys and support staff were working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, the firm's leaders made a bold decision: They would not only renovate their 100,000-square-foot Manhattan office but also expand it to 125,000 square feet.

"We are banking on the philosophy that if we build it, they will come," says

Joseph J. Palermo, Lowenstein's chief operating officer. The project, scheduled to be completed in 2024, should feature more than 200 private light-filled offices with 12-foot ceilings, open collaborative spaces, high-tech conference rooms for hybrid meetings, a bistro-style café, a coffee bar, a three-story atrium and a fitness center with city views.

Palermo and firm leaders expect the revamped office to be a "destination space" for about 250 people, fostering collaboration opportunities and ad hoc mentoring. And as competition for talent accelerates, they hope those amenities will be an influential recruiting tool.

Lowenstein Sandler's bullish approach to office space contrasts with firms that have trimmed their real estate footprint as their teams embraced remote and hybrid work. Law firms renewing their leases since the

pandemic began in March 2020 have pared their square footage by at least 15%, and those that have relocated have slashed their footprints by as much as 30%, according to architecture and design firm Gensler, which is handling Lowenstein's expansion.

Last year, Duane Morris announced plans to trim 8,000 square feet from its Pittsburgh office space, relocating to an 11,000-square-foot office. Perkins Coie has shrunk its real estate footprint by 24%, reducing office space by more than 71,000 square feet in Chicago; Denver; Palo Alto, California; and Seattle. *The American Lawyer* reported in April 2021 that nearly 40% of Am Law 100 firms were planning to reduce their office space.

A rendering of Lowenstein Sandler's new Manhattan office lobby.

‘Offices that are exciting’

Firms bucking that downsizing trend say they’re investing in real estate to spark collaboration and camaraderie that lawyers, associates and support staff simply can’t experience when they’re siloed in home or remote offices.

Employees at Edelson’s three offices enjoy perks including catered meals, volleyball and colorful murals in dog-friendly workspaces.

“It’s really important for us to have physical offices that are exciting to go to,” says Jay Edelson, the firm’s founder and CEO. “Our offices are our cultural center.”

The 40-lawyer firm has been in what he calls “deep-growth mode” for the past few years, and in the summer of 2021, it expanded its 4,500-square-foot San Francisco office to 7,500 square feet. It plans to double its lawyer head count in the next five years.

Edelson was initially resistant to allowing remote work because he feared firm culture, productivity and training would suffer, but he says he was proven wrong. About 40% of Edelson staff and attorneys have hybrid or remote schedules. Only those in the office at least three days a week have dedicated offices; others use a hotel-style reservation system.

Taft Stettinius & Hollister is renovating and expanding several offices to accommodate a higher head count and a demand for amenities. In the last five years, the firm’s head count has jumped from 360 lawyers to 675. The firm plans to add 8,000 square feet to its 21,000-square-foot office in Dayton, Ohio, and it expects to expand its Chicago office by 40% to more than 100,000 square feet. The project, scheduled to be completed in 2023, will include a high-tech conference center, seating to encourage collaboration and a stylish café with a plant wall.

“It really came down to reimagining the space as an investment in our people,” said Bob Hicks, Taft’s chairman and managing partner.

The relatively low cost of Midwestern real estate—\$25 to \$35 per square foot—makes it feasible for Taft to



“It’s really important for us to have physical offices that are exciting to go to.” —Jay Edelson

provide dedicated offices even for those who don’t use them daily.

“It’s not good to take away hybrid workers’ offices and expect them to want to come in,” Hicks said.

In January, Greenberg Traurig added two offices in Long Island and expanded its other metro New York offices to accommodate lawyers who live nearby, says Richard A. Rosenbaum, the firm’s executive chairman. The firm opened an office in Portland, Oregon, in February.

With fewer New York metro-area attorneys using the Manhattan office, the firm will downsize from four floors to three but invest heavily in amenities,



including a state-of-the-art conference center and bright offices for nearly every attorney, plus spaces for visiting lawyers.

“We believe in people being together as much as possible,” Rosenbaum says. “You have to create an environment they want to come to.”

To attract Lowenstein’s attorneys to the Manhattan office, Gensler’s design team drew inspiration from hotel lobbies and airport lounges, which are welcoming and lively spaces that encourage contact. “Workplaces designed for human interaction will energize people,” says Gensler’s Tim Bromiley, an expert in law firm design who is overseeing Lowenstein’s project.

He and his team balanced those gathering spaces with quiet nooks and sound-muffling acoustics to foster concentration and deep thinking. Smaller offices encourage lawyers to move meetings to livelier communal spaces, and glass office walls brighten work areas and promote eye contact and connection.

Lowenstein’s Palermo is confident that the stylish design will prove irresistible.

“I’ve been here all along, and there have been some really quiet days,” he says. “But my local Starbucks has a line outside the door again. People are back in the city.” ■

Joseph J. Palermo



MARKETING

Optimal Advertising

Despite consumers relying more on web searches, some lawyers aren't prioritizing SEO and social media marketing

BY DANIELLE BRAFF

Michelle Creeden, the practice administrator for National Legal Center, a law firm in Candia, New Hampshire, always relied on business referrals rather than advertisements.

It had never been a problem—until the pandemic arrived and obliterated those businesses, drying up the referrals seemingly overnight.

So two years ago, Creeden turned to search engine optimization and social media to market the law firm.

“It is definitely a long game and a work in progress, but we’re starting to see success with this strategy,” Creeden says.

Prior to implementing the SEO strategy, in which the firm improves its website so that it’s more visible and listed higher by internet search engines,



the vast majority of visitors to their site were existing clients and offline referrals. Since focusing on SEO, they’ve seen their impressions increase by more than 1,200%, and organic traffic now accounts for about 42% of visitors (it was previously around 7%).

“The unexpected short-term benefit we hadn’t anticipated is the B2B relationships we’ve been able to form as a result of an improved online presence,” Creeden says.

Law firms are slowly but surely making the jump from email marketing to social media and SEO advertising—but they’re not all on the other side yet. According to a December 2021 survey from CallRail, a marketing analytics and business communications platform, nearly half the firms surveyed snag business via social media and internet searches. But only 17% make SEO or social media advertising a priority. The survey says email remains the most popular means of digital marketing for law firms, with 61% of respondents relying on email lists to keep in touch with leads that haven’t been converted to clients. Despite that, the survey found that respondents listed email marketing as their second-worst performing channel.

This comes as more consumers are relying on online searches to find attorneys. A March study from Martindale-Avvo reveals that 70% of participating legal consumers look at online content, such as profiles and reviews, to guide their decision-making when it comes to hiring a lawyer.

Why the disconnect?

Seth Price, a founding partner of Price Benowitz Accident Injury Lawyers in Washington, D.C., says many law firms don’t use SEO or social media because they’re stuck in an older mindset when it comes to marketing, and they don’t believe that change is necessary.

“As a result, they think there is no need for other forms of marketing because what they’re doing has worked well enough so far,” Price says. “But newer law firms are recognizing the gaps when it comes to digital

Michelle Creeden



marketing, and this is allowing them to grow quickly and therefore secure a more competitive position within the industry.”

Price says if law firms put effort into SEO, then potential clients will find them when searching online in their area. SEO also pushes firms to improve their websites, ultimately creating better experiences for site visitors, which impacts conversion rates, he says.

Needle in a haystack

Allison Mundy, the owner and managing attorney with Mundy Legal Services in Tomball, Texas, says understanding SEO is overwhelming and intimidating initially, but the returns are worth the time invested. She had been relying on networking and paid phone ads for business, but she also hired a social media manager to optimize her SEO when she started her law firm.

“Without proper SEO, no one was even finding my website,” Mundy says.

During the firm’s first few years, she would also run Facebook boosts. “Each time we would run a boost, the number of calls would increase. Six years later, I am No. 1 or 2 on Google’s list, and over 60% of my clients come from Google reviews and searches,” she says.

Ryan Reiffert, the owner of the Law Offices of Ryan Reiffert in San Antonio, uses SEO and social media, depending on his needs at the time. For example, a probate client will skew toward middle-aged and older, so he or she will be

less likely to be on TikTok; an LLC formation client will most likely be younger, so getting good brand exposure on social media will help, Reiffert says.

Some firms will outsource the task. Kia Roberts, the founder and principal of Triangle Investigations, a group of lawyers and expert investigators performing misconduct investigations, says a large part of her firm’s success since its 2019 inception has been due to focusing on its SEO efforts—which she outsourced. Her SEO conversion rate is 50%, she says.

Roberts says the concept of successful SEO is hard to articulate and explain, which may be why few attorneys are willing to invest in it. The practice of law, on the other hand, is a very concrete and methodical realm of work, involving countless laws, statutes and regulations, many of which are applied in a black-or-white manner, she says.

Still, Roberts says she realized that as a brand-new firm, clients gained by word-of-mouth would only go so far until they had established themselves as a trusted firm. That’s where SEO was essential, ramping up the firm’s launch



and expanding its client list quickly and methodically.

“We have gotten countless clients who have found us via Google search due to our SEO rankings,” Roberts says. “I have become an SEO evangelist and am thrilled that we committed to this path as a growth strategy.” ■

TECHNOLOGY

Welcome Back

Participants were pleased to be at the first in-person ABA Techshow in two years

BY LYLE MORAN,
AMANDA ROBERT AND
STEPHANIE FRANCIS WARD

For many attendees, this year’s ABA Techshow was the first large-scale in-person legal conference since the 2020 iteration of the show—which took place right before the COVID-19 pandemic added the phrase “shelter-in-place” into our vernacular.

This year’s show, which took place March 2-5 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago, wasn’t quite a return to normal. There were virtual sessions for people who couldn’t—or chose not to—make it. Meanwhile, there were fewer booths in the expo hall than prior years, with the number of exhibitors at 71% of the 2020 show, according to Lyndsey Kent, meetings manager for the ABA Law Practice Division. In-person attendance this year was half of what it was in 2020, and vendor attendance was 70% of what it was in 2020.

Nevertheless, for some vendors, setting up shop in the in-person exhibit hall again for the first time since the ABA Techshow 2020 gave them a chance to cement relationships that they have built online with customers.

Brian Gomez, a senior account manager at practice management software company PracticePanther, said it felt much more natural to connect with potential customers roaming the ABA Techshow Expo hall than scheduling online sessions. “People are curious about the product, but they get to see the people behind it and the personalities,” Gomez says. “It is a little surreal after being virtual for the pandemic.”

SPONSORED COLUMN

Insights with Jack Newton

How to Differentiate Your Services in a Crowded Legal Market

By Jack Newton

Most lawyers I know pursued a career in law because they wanted to help people, not because they wanted to manage a business. But there's no denying it: a law firm is a business—and the principles of running a successful company also apply to legal practice.

Product-market fit is a concept that's central to any business. It boils down to the question, are people willing to pay for what you're offering? As simple as that sounds, it can be difficult to achieve, especially when selling a product that may be unfamiliar or difficult to understand for most people.

Another critical aspect to product-market fit is to know that people will pay for what you offer *over other businesses* offering a similar service. This is especially important in a highly competitive field such as legal.

Any lawyer should be prepared to provide the best legal outcomes possible for their clients. What countless law firms overlook, however, is that the actual *experience* of working with a firm can significantly influence whether their services will be competitive in the market.

A prime example within the technology industry that is uniquely salient for legal is the near-ubiquitous rise of Netflix and

the mass disruption it's caused in the entertainment industry.

What's really easy to forget about Netflix, at least in the earlier iterations of its service, is that the content it offered was essentially the same as what you'd get through movie rentals and broadcast television. What made Netflix unique was how easy and convenient it was for people to get what they wanted, first through a mail-based DVD rental model, then eventually with on-demand content delivered online.

Netflix eliminated the need to drive to the video store. There were no commercials or late fees. Viewers could watch what they wanted, when they wanted—and they didn't need a *TV Guide* to tell them when to be in the living room.

To put it another way, Netflix outperformed an entire industry by serving the same content in a better way.

Much of Netflix's success stems from the notion of obsessively understanding what customers are looking for and finding ways to deliver it in the most seamless way possible. People are willing to pay for the Netflix experience over what other businesses offer—and their growth has been exponential.

This isn't to say that the services one lawyer offers is the same as the next, but the experience a lawyer offers is highly comparable between law firms—and is evaluated against experiences with other types of businesses. Any law firm looking to succeed in today's legal service market should be similarly obsessing over what today's clients are looking for.

What do today's clients care about? Some great insights can be found in Clio's *Legal Trends Report*. For example, outside of a positive outcome for their legal issue, more clients are seeking the convenience of digital interactions provided through technology. The majority of clients want the option to work with their lawyer using services like video conferencing, e-signatures, and online payments.

The demand for ease and convenience when working with businesses is more than proven. Similar to how Netflix was able to redefine its market, firms that package their services in a way that is more transparent and accessible for clients are the ones redefining the market for legal services. For any firm operating today, it's worth asking, how do your client experiences compare to the next firm?



Jack Newton is the CEO and founder of Clio and a pioneer of cloud-based legal technology. Jack has spearheaded efforts to educate the legal community on the security, ethics, and privacy issues surrounding cloud computing, and is a nationally recognized writer and speaker on the state of the legal industry. Jack is the author of *The Client-Centered Law Firm*, the essential book for law firms looking to succeed in the experience-driven age, available at clientcenteredlawfirm.com.



Sarah Thompson, vice president of experiential marketing with SixFifty, which is Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati's legal technology subsidiary, says it's refreshing to be able to have face-to-face conversations with potential customers and fellow vendors.

"Now more than ever, people are wanting a better relationship, and we are stepping up and saying, 'We want a better relationship too,'" says Thompson, who adds that en route to the show, she sent her colleagues on Slack a message along the lines of: "Are you ready for people?"

Moving forward

Although most attendees felt comfortable enough to eschew masks and social distancing, COVID-19 continued to cast a long shadow over proceedings. Acknowledging the radical changes brought on by the pandemic, many panel discussions focused on remote working and virtual offices.

For instance, in a session titled "Location, Location, No-cation: Law Firm Real Estate Post-Pandemic," Jeana Goosmann—the founder, CEO and managing partner of the Goosmann Law Firm—noted how firms' use of office space was already shrinking even before the pandemic. Now COVID-19 has pushed even more law firm owners and managing partners to rethink how they are using their space. They also are often balancing competing expectations: Although many lawyers have embraced working remotely at least a couple of days per week, others are eager to return to their offices.

"Many partners are back to work, and maybe they are also committed to a longer-term lease that they have to think about how to handle," said Goosmann, whose law firm has offices in Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota.

Another session, "Ethically Managing Modern Emergencies: Are You Ready?" underscored how law firms should always have plans in place to deal with disasters such as pandemics or inclement weather. Session co-leader Anne-Marie Rabaco, the founder and principal of Modern Juris, shared data

from the ABA TechReport 2021 that found only 36% of survey participants reported having an incident response plan for their law practices.

Additionally, lawyers should be aware of ABA Formal Opinion 482. The 2018 finding states that lawyers are bound by ABA model rules obligating them to have sufficient competence in technology and to take reasonable steps to maintain client communications even in the event of a disaster.

"I'm hoping this will spark in your



brain the importance of having a disaster recovery plan," Rabaco said.

Session co-leader Joshua Weaver, director of the State Bar of Texas' Opportunity & Justice Incubator, added that it's important lawyers don't get paralyzed by fear. Many attorneys understand that they should come up with disaster recovery plans, but they realize they are not experts on what should be done, he added. "And then they freeze and do nothing. If you are going to take anything away, it's that you don't need to overthink this. You just need to do what's reasonable, and do it before bad things happen."

Practical solutions

Some attendees were looking for specific tools or programs to help them solve specific problems. For instance, Judge Scott Schlegel of the 24th Judicial District Court in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, says he has been trying to figure out a way to allow inmates to electronically sign plea agreements in real time rather than have paper copies delivered to them in jail, which can be a time-consuming process. Schlegel said a Techshow vendor suggested that he just use the chat feature on Zoom to share a link to the plea agreement with those inmates, appearing at their hearings via the video platform.

"If I'm able to have the lawyer sign it first and press a button that sends it to me in my Slack channel, I can then easily upload it anywhere I want and provide a link within the Zoom chat feature so that the inmate can sign next from the device they are currently using," says Schlegel, a 2021 ABA Journal Legal Rebel. "One idea with zero cost."

Douglas Lusk, president and CEO of the National Society for Legal Technology, says he came to Techshow hoping to find ideas for the latest tools that he could share with students he teaches about legal technology. One that quickly caught his attention was DepoDirect, which supplies technicians and court reporting staff who host virtual depositions and operate all aspects of the platform. "That is probably the biggest one where the tech geek inside of me went: 'I need to be showing people that this exists,'" Lusk says.

Navigating all of the available technology can be overwhelming. As such, Dorna Moini, the CEO and co-founder of Documate, recommends that lawyers who are not as familiar with technology focus on four basic areas to start: intake, document drafting, payments and ensuring their data is smoothly transferring between different solutions and is securely stored.

"I think those four elements are things you can implement today," says Moini, a 2019 Legal Rebel. ■



MIND YOUR BUSINESS

Making an Impact

Law firms can attract and retain talent by providing purpose for young attorneys

BY BARB MCGIVERN

Hybrid work isn't the only change in how people prefer to work today. It's perhaps not even the biggest change.

As much of the world begins, hopefully, to emerge into post-pandemic life, finding purpose in one's career has become more crucial than ever. While the legal field in particular can often be perceived as grueling work, it's also an industry that enables its professionals to feel that they're truly contributing to the greater good of society, according to a new study published by the Thomson Reuters Institute: *Finding Purpose and Having a Social Impact: Lawyers and Tax Professionals Speak Out*.

In fact, 99% of law firm attorneys and 92% of those in-house feel that

their work provides them with a strong sense of purpose, according to the study. Professionals' need for purposeful work is critical for employers to understand, especially when it comes to finding and retaining talent in the age of the "Great Resignation."

The 'Great Resignation'

The Great Resignation has swept across the national employment landscape, altering the future of work across virtually every industry.

The legal profession is not immune to this trend, as turnover numbers skyrocket. Law firms came "dangerously close" to losing nearly one-quarter of their associates in 2021. The result has been an ongoing bidding war for talent that saw average associate compensation grow by 11.3% through November.

Perhaps this shift in the employee/ employer power dynamic has allowed attorneys to prioritize their professional decisions based on factors aside from compensation. For example, Barbara Mendel Mayden's article "Law Firm Recruitment and Retention in the Age of COVID-19," which ran in the ABA's *Law Practice Magazine*, found that the values displayed by employers during the pandemic were cited as strong differentiators for potential recruits as well

as a key reason for potential defection from organizations that did not share employees' values.

A sense of purpose

The growing importance of finding greater value in one's work has been steadily increasing as millennials take more prominent roles in the workforce. In a survey by Olivet Nazarene University of more than 2,000 millennials, 90% express that having their work make a positive impact on the world is either "somewhat" or "very" important with regard to their career decisions.

Millennials are more willing than the generations before them to put their values ahead of employer loyalty. A survey by Great Place to Work, a workplace consultancy, indicated that millennials are nearly four times more likely to intend to leave their jobs than baby boomers, and 11 times more than Gen Xers if they feel they are not fairly compensated or that their work does not have purpose beyond just the job.

4 ways to find meaning

The Thomson Reuters Institute reached out to attorneys in more than 60 countries, representing a broad range of practices, for its *Finding Purpose* survey, which indicated that attorneys took professional pride in their ability

to have a broader social impact. The report also found that the ways in which they were able to contribute to the greater good fell into four categories.

- 1. Enabling a civilized and orderly society.** Nearly half of law firm attorneys surveyed felt they played a critical role in ensuring their clients—and their clients' companies—behave in an ethically and legally responsible way. These attorneys felt that contributing to a more orderly society was their primary method of social impact. Providing pro bono legal aid, achieving justice for clients and upholding the rule of law were some of the specific ways they made an impact.
- 2. Having a direct impact on society.** Among in-house attorneys, 36% felt that their primary source of social purpose came from their ability to directly impact society. This was higher than those in law firms, where only 29% of the attorneys cited the same. Legal professionals cited the opportunity to help establish environmental, social and corporate governance initiatives for their companies and clients—whether through promoting net-zero climate emissions promises or fair labor practices—as a critical way they're able to positively impact the world. Others felt that the freedom to pursue volunteer or charitable work in the context of their job was another avenue through which to make a positive impact on society.
- 3. Creating wealth and employment opportunities.** Just over one-third of lawyers at law firms and in-house attorneys (34% for each group) indicated that their ability to create jobs and wealth provided them with a sense of pride and purpose. They expanded on this by indicating that they saw meaning in their efforts to help their businesses succeed and play an important role in creating thriving communities.
- 4. Knowledge-sharing and empowerment.** Attorneys noted a sense of professional purpose through their



"Finding purpose in one's career has become more crucial than ever."
—Barb McGivern

efforts to engage in knowledge-sharing or other empowerment activities. Many felt that they were contributing to the greater social good in other ways, including mentoring and developing the skills and talents of colleagues; engaging in other professional skills development; educating people about their legal rights; and serving as a role model for women, minorities or other underrepresented groups within the legal profession.

Culture counts

Attorneys are noticing the firms and organizations that are moving—and growing—alongside them. Like their counterparts in other fields, attorneys long to feel a sense of greater value and meaning in their work, enabling them to be a part of a larger movement with the ability to impact society in tangible ways.

Lawyers also want to feel appreciated and recognized, and they are eager for opportunities for both growth and personal satisfaction in their work. Employers need to develop—and clearly communicate—policies and procedures

to assure equity and fairness in assignment, evaluation, compensation and promotion decisions. There should also be ample opportunity for training and professional development to help attorneys advance faster.

Finally, employers should recognize the important role that work-life balance plays in employee satisfaction. Hybrid or remote work options that provide flexibility allow attorneys to focus on the individual values that are most important to them. Employers can further demonstrate their commitment to their employees' well-being by providing wellness and mental health programs.

Attorneys have a vested interest in working for companies and firms that actively contribute to the greater good within their communities. In order to find and keep good people, law firms and organizations alike must take notice of attorneys' priorities and provide opportunities for their work to align with their values. Enabling attorneys to create a positive impact in their community and on society overall is an all-around win. ■

Barb McGivern is general manager of the legal professionals midsize law firm segment for Thomson Reuters.

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