



Neglecting employee wellbeing can lead to poor mental health, lack of motivation and, ultimately, diminished performance

Tech check-up

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The legal profession is notorious for the long and often stressful working days required to achieve a desired outcome for clients. However, at a time when awareness of mental health, wellbeing and mindfulness within the workplace are on the rise, firms must pause and think about what they're doing to support their team and promote wellness at work. Studies have shown that ignoring employee wellbeing can be hugely detrimental to law firms; neglecting it can lead to poor mental health, lack of motivation and, ultimately, diminished performance.

Assessing your firm's internal communications is always a good place to start when looking at how to create a healthy working environment. Everyday workload is enough for people to deal with – adding internal communication issues into the mix can quickly interfere with client cases.

Integrating an efficient intranet portal is one of the best ways to combat miscommunication. Your firm's intranet could act as a one-stop-shop where teams can collaborate on projects and receive useful information regarding the company. By implementing an effective communication channel in your firm, you're engaging your employees with the firm's goals and creating a less confusing and stressful working environment. This, in turn, will lead to better service to clients.

Listening to client needs is also a way to increase wellness. Clients expect firms to provide a high level of service – this includes fast communication and transparency. If it isn't satisfactory, the client may take their frustration out on whoever they're dealing with and this can lead to stressful interactions for your workforce. Focus on improving the overall service given to clients by investing in client-facing technology, such as mobile apps. These apps can use your firm's practice management system (PMS) to create a data-driven environment, act as a tool to engage with

clients directly by updating them on their case in real time, and create an agile working environment for your firm. Recently, providing an agile working environment in particular has come to the forefront. A pandemic was surely not on any law firm's business continuity plan. Being faced with having to close offices, firms risk losing new and ongoing work – which can create panic in the workplace.

Firms must provide the required support to ensure there's a smooth transition during this time and create a level of normality for teams. New innovative packages that help your firm continue with new client onboarding can be easily integrated with your firm's work processes. Key features of these technologies include integrating your firm's website with online forms that can take a client's core details and transfer them directly into your PMS. Other tools ensure secure interaction with clients through Skype for Business (now Teams). These are great digital solutions for firms experiencing uncertainty, as they can also facilitate secure payment portals to ensure a stable and reliable cashflow.

We've seen first-hand how stress within a firm could be attributed to the lack of automation within the workplace. Without effective automation in admin and operations, fee earners are sometimes left spending countless days in the office completing tasks that could have been done automatically, in hours, using remote settings with the correct system in place. Also, consider the range of automated pdf forms, which are available for legal services such as family law and probate. These forms streamline workflow and integrate with your PMS, easing fee earner workload and making for a more efficient workplace and healthier workforce. It's clear that a joined-up approach to IT is one of the best routes your firm can take to reduce workplace stress. Apply it to the correct areas of your firm and you will see a change for the better. **LPM**



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