



Are You a “Good” Partner?

You’re a partner in a law firm – large or small – and at the end of the day, you satisfy your clients’ needs and do enough business to practice comfortably. You’re meeting your goals – but are you a *good* partner? And how do we define that term? Is it like being a good roommate? A good parent? Teacher? Student? Partnership requires a synthesis of all of these roles, among countless others.

Evaluating your performance as a partner goes well beyond billings and bringing in new business. Ask yourself the following questions and see how “good” you really are.

Are You an Effective Leader?

1. Do you lead or simply manage?
2. Are you proactive or simply reactive?
3. Do you avoid waste and redundancy?
4. Do you share credit when things go right?

Are You a Team Player?

1. Do you prioritize work for associates?
2. Do you ask associates about work/deadlines for others when giving them assignments?
3. Do you coordinate assignments for associates with your partners?
4. Do you proactively mentor (or just judge and criticize) associates?

5. Do you review all substantive work by associates before it goes out or is filed?
6. Do you give associates time budgets and deadlines on work?
7. Do you give associates prompt feedback on their work product?
8. Do you treat your partners as equals?
9. Do you treat your partners with respect?
10. Do you help a partner who is “swamped”?
11. Do you assist a partner or associate who is having a family or personal problem?
12. Have you introduced your clients to other partners?

Does Your Staff Feel Appreciated?

1. Do you treat your staff with respect?
2. Do you give your staff work throughout the day so as to avoid day-end stress?
3. Do you thank your staff for a special effort or a job well done?
4. Do you coordinate with colleagues with whom you share an assistant?
5. Does your assistant cover tasks for the firm to the same extent as others?

How Do You Handle Billing and New Business?

1. Do you enter your time on a regular basis?
2. Do you bill your clients at least once a month?

3. Do you follow up your accounts receivable once a week?
4. Do you address issues with clients who have ceased to be responsive to requests for payment?
5. Do you do conflict searches on new clients/matters?
6. Do you get signed retainer agreements from new clients before commencing work?
7. Do you get advance/evergreen retainers on new clients/matters?
8. Do you get prior approval from management committee on all special fee arrangements?
9. Do you get a second opinion on contingent fee matters?
10. Do you get a second partner to review new litigation matters?
11. Do you avoid non-reimbursable expenses?
12. Do you have your clients pay large out-of-pocket expenses directly?
13. Do you routinely reduce time charges before you send out bills?
14. Do you routinely grant clients concessions on billed amounts?

Are You an Island?

1. Do you think running the firm is someone else's job?
2. Do you leave work to the last minute?
3. Do you blame associates for your own failure to supervise?
4. Do you think you are the only partner who is working?
5. Do you think that your work is the most important in the office?
6. Do you think that you are the only partner dealing with difficult clients or complex problems?
7. Do you think that you are the only partner who has to address emergencies?
8. Do you think that you are the only partner with family/health/other issues?

Are you really a "good" partner? ■

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