

# LAW OFFICE™ ADMINISTRATOR

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## Moving the office? Here's how to get the job done

... WITH THE LEAST AMOUNT OF TIME, COST, AND HASSLE

### **SURVIVING THE OFFICE MOVE**

Getting ready to move the office? It's an old saw that applies: fail to plan, and plan to fail.

Even the simplest of oversights such as failing to reserve the elevator "can bring the best laid plans right to a halt," says **BILL BRACK**, CMS, vice-president of sales for South Hills Movers Inc., a

*This issue of LOA starts with one of the biggest jobs an administrator ever faces: the office move.*

*On this page, a moving company tells how to prepare. On page 5, a furniture consulting firm tells how to choose the four most necessary items of furniture. And on page 6, a New York administrator outlines how her firm handled the enormous amount of administrative work involved in a relocation.*

Pittsburgh-based moving and relocation company.

And every minute the movers wait is another unbillable minute the firm has to pay for.

Here Brack outlines a plan. It starts eight months ahead of time and doesn't end until the move is over.

### FIRST, A PLAN AND A COMMITTEE

#### *8 to 4 months out*

#### • Write out a preliminary plan.

List everything. Tell where the firm is going, the preferred move date, the time of day, the services the office will need from the mover, and the names of moving companies to interview.

There are a lot of issues to think about at that stage. One is the best time for the move. Do the attorneys want to move over one weekend? in weekend phases? Does the firm want to close for a few days and move during the week?

Also take into consideration the business cycle,

Brack says. For example, if the firm sends out bills at the end of the month, it may not want to move during those days.

Another point to ponder is whether the firm or the mover will provide the moving insurance.

Another is whether the firm wants to keep its old site operational until the move is completed or shut down entirely at some point. That decision will determine when the technology gets transferred.

There are plans to be made for space as well.

If the firm is downsizing, it may need to find off-site storage for the records it currently keeps in-house.

If it's moving to a larger space, it may need to buy additional furniture and office equipment.

If it's changing its image, it may want to buy new

*(please turn to page 3)*

### IN THIS ISSUE

On Better Communication: The majuscules in that top case.....2

*Surviving the office move:*  
With office furniture, cost and efficiency are the bellwethers.....5

*Surviving the office move:*  
How a New York manager handled the administrative aspects of moving.....6

How to close the deal on new business at the first client meeting.....8

This Month's Idea: One complaint form ends the unnecessary staff interruptions.....10

Want to improve attitude? Give staff what they want most: recognition.....10

Beware the new - and big - risk of outsourcing: conflicts of interest.....11

takes more than a little planning to move from five 36-inch drawers to three 42-inch drawers.

### A FINAL GET TOGETHER

At a month out, everybody – attorneys, staff and a representative from the moving company – met to go over the schedule.

They planned coverage for anyone who would be out during the week of the move. They went over the floor plans. They reviewed the rules of the new building. Some affected operations. For example, the building will not allow office deliveries after 6:00 p.m.

### AFTERWARDS, A FOLLOW-UP FORM

And once the move was done, Schissel drew up a post-move form to request changes, repairs, or assistance.

The requestor circles the problem – phone, computer, fax, electrical outlet, furniture, filing cabinet, missing items, keys, carpet, air conditioning, and other.

Below that is a space to describe what needs to be done, for example, “computer – I would like to have the monitor moved to such-and-such an area.”

At the bottom of the form is a space where Schissel notes the follow-up that’s done and the date it’s completed. ❖

## How to close the deal on new business at the first client meeting

Winning a client’s business is a sales job.

And the sale has to be made at the initial client meeting.

And the closing of that sale “is a defined process,” explains attorney **LISA GOLDSTEIN**, president of FB Corporate Strategies, a Lafayette Hill, PA, company that specializes in connection selling and sales training for law firms.

Here’s how to seal the deal.

### THE TELEPHONE WON’T DO

The primary rule for securing new business is to ask for it face-to-face. That means the firm has to convince the potential client to meet. That’s the surest way – and often the only way – “to develop a connection.”

The firm is selling a service, and that service is the

attorney, Goldstein explains. Thus, it’s essential for the client to see the attorney.

In addition, communication relies on more than words.

She cites one study that found only 7% of the message is delivered via what’s said. What really gets the message across are voice quality (38%) and body language (55%) such as facial expressions, gestures, handshake, and the speaker’s appearance.

Keeping that in mind, suppose the firm gets a request for proposals and sends in a written proposal without meeting the requestor. “The chances of getting that business are pretty slim.”

She recommends telling every potential client “I need to understand more about your situation so I can see if we can help you. Can we get together at such-and-such time to discuss it in more detail?”

Then make it convenient to meet, including offering to go to the prospect’s office.

### WHO’S BUYING WHAT?

Don’t go into that meeting cold. Find out “what the client is buying” and match that to what the firm is selling.

Research that client. Look on the Internet. Learn about the industry and the challenges and issues it’s facing. And learn about the individual who will be at the meeting.

If it’s a personal representation as opposed to a corporate matter, find out about the incident or the problem that needs to be addressed and when it occurred and where the issue stands now and what that person wants done. Knowing what the client wants to accomplish, Goldstein says, “is knowing what that client is buying.”

Then get ready to show that the firm is selling the solution. Prepare “a narrow statement” on what it can do for that situation.

### KNOW THE STANDARD BUYING PATTERN

Any sale has a “buying pattern,” Goldstein says. When people walk into a store, they don’t buy something immediately. They say, “I’m just looking.” Then they walk around for awhile, and only after they’ve seen what’s in the store do they make the buying decision.

It’s the same with legal services. That potential client isn’t ready to close the deal. There’s some looking and shopping to do. And the firm’s job is to show that it has just what that client is looking for.

Thus, the sale doesn’t begin with a litany of the firm’s qualifications and accomplishments. Instead, it begins with questions about what the client needs and likes and doesn’t like, and statements here and there pointing out how the firm can meet those needs and

likes and how it can even exceed the services and advantages and perks the client wants.

She gives this example of lead-the-way questioning:

- *Tell me about the worst experience you have had with an attorney in the past.*

Suppose the client says "well, we worked with one firm and the billings were so astronomical that the accounting department got mad at me and I didn't get my raise. They billed us for things that weren't fair."

A good response: "we can come up with a fixed rate for this situation."

- *What's the best experience you have had with an attorney?*

If the answer is "we had a fixed rate with a firm and we liked it a lot," respond with a similar advantage, and if possible, best what the client has just cited, perhaps "we have a fixed rate too, and you can check your bills online."

- *What's the most important goal you face in your position?*

Find out what the goals are and give examples of how the firm has helped other clients meet similar goals and also how it has solved problems similar to the one the client has.

What all that does is move the client along to the "aha!" or the point of realization that there really is a solution to this problem and this firm is the one that can make it happen.

As for the information about the firm, leave that until the end. And then get the client to ask for it. She recommends saying "would it help you if I told you a little bit about our firm?"

And follow that with "a very concise statement" geared to that client's needs, not a list of first-person accolades.

## NOW FOR THE CLOSE

To close, request a commitment.

Ask "would you like to work with our firm?" or "are we a firm you would like to work with?"

And if the answer is yes, ask "what's the next step in the process?"

If the response is iffy – perhaps that the company has to get budget approval or that the client will meet with two other firms before making a decision, it's still possible to get a preliminary answer, Goldstein says. Just ask "is there anything we haven't covered that would prevent our firm from gaining your business?"

If the response is evasive such as "I'm going to think about it," ask "what things are you thinking about?"

Press as much as possible for a yes or no answer, she says. Even if it's no, at least it's an answer. And

it's better to get it now than to wait around and keep working on a client who isn't going to happen.

## SPEAKING THE NONVERBAL LANGUAGE

In addition, Goldstein says, be alert to the nonverbal language – on both sides.

From the client side, the obvious message is crossed arms or legs. That's an indication the client "is not open to what's being said."

But what many people fail to realize is that men and women have different languages. Women tend to nod and smile, "because culturally, they are taught that it's polite." Men don't.

So if the potential client is a woman and if she is smiling and nodding, don't assume she's in agreement with what's being said. Ask the same questions and get down to the "do you want to work with our firm?"

From the firm's side, the most nonverbal communication is to mirror the client. "People like to buy from people who are the same as they are" because likeness heightens the comfort level, she says.

Listen to the speed of the client's voice and match the pace.

Do the same with the tone of voice. Meet soft with soft and loud with loud.

If the other person has a firm handshake, respond in kind.

If the person "is sitting a little slouched," do the same.

In addition, focus the conversation on the other person's preferences. If it's a financial person, focus on the cost benefit of the representation. If it's a visual person, have something to look at such as a powerpoint presentation. Goldstein points out that people who respond with "I see" are often visual.

Even match the number of people. Ask ahead of time "who's going to be at the meeting, and what are their titles?"

If there are going to be three representatives from the client and one is a human resources person, there need to be three representatives from the firm with one who can address human resources.

