

## Creating an “A” Team

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Excellent team members can be the difference between loving your practice and simply tolerating it or even dreading it. Beginning day one, I started my practice with a full-time team member. I was too afraid not to. I knew I would need the help and I was smart enough to know I couldn’t do it all by myself. I had internalized the “E-Myth” before every reading the book—I could not possibly do everything that needed to be done in a brand new practice and still focus on my unique ability.

I convinced my paralegal from my old practice to join me in my new practice—just she and I setting out on my (our) own to conquer the world. What I didn’t know then, that I know now, is we were not well-suited for each other when it was only the two of us. If you are familiar with the Kolby index, we were both high greens—meaning we have lots of good ideas but are not necessarily great on follow through. So early on, we had lots of activity, but tons of loose ends. We started lots of great projects, but finished none. I finally realized, one of us had to go—and it wasn’t going to be me.

Future hires brought greater success. I looked for people less like me, more complimentary to my needs. First, I encouraged my partner to join me in my folly. He was a great compliment to my style—in fact, almost the polar opposite so we work together perfectly—a great business marriage. Then we hired a full-time receptionist/secretary and a part-time college student. Both were with us for years. Until...the college student graduated and set off on her own career and the practice grew bigger and faster with more responsibility than the other wanted to assume. So here we were starting over, again. I tend to be very optimistic in my hiring—I like to give people the benefit of the doubt. So much so, I often hired people who were not capable of handling their job responsibilities. I figured if they were nice people, somewhat motivated, they would work out. I think I was wrong more than I was right.

After hiring a couple of team members that proved to be reliable, trustworthy, coachable and willing to work very hard, we finally got smart. Today, our team hires the team. That’s right—we don’t even meet a prospective team member until the rest of the team has given the thumbs up. This has proved to be our best hiring strategy yet. Our team has turned out to be the best resource for adding new team members. They do all the screening, all the interviewing, and ultimately make the final hiring decision. As a result, they sometimes get the not so awesome responsibility of letting a team member go if it doesn’t work out. More times than not, however, our team has continued to grow with like-minded, work-oriented, team-centered individuals. We couldn’t be happier or prouder of our team—they make everything we do possible every day.

This strategy works for hiring associates as well. We learned our lesson the hard way—after five failed attempts to find a compatible associate. Most importantly, we stopped hiring right out of law school. Instead, we started hiring legal interns during their first or second year of law school. And, true to form—we let the team do all of the initial interviewing and screening. You learn a lot about a person fast when they realize they have to pass inspection from the team before they even have a chance to

interview with the lawyers. It demonstrates the importance of the team to the overall success of the practice.

An effective team is essential to allowing you to focus on your unique ability and do what you do best—build your practice, meet with clients, and focus on your unique abilities. Empower your team to create the “A” team to support you on your journey to success.

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