

5 Reasons Why You Should Have an Office Manager

By Kristina Schneider, Executive Assistant

If you are an estate planning attorney, CPA, financial advisor, or life insurance agent and you're running your own practice, then you already know how precious your time is and, hopefully, how valuable that time is to your practice and its overall success. It is important that you see yourself as the "talent" and that you maximize the use of your time for tasks that only you can do. You need someone else to be the "producer-director", handling other necessary details.

All too often, we see estate planners that are spending far too much of their time on the daily operations of their businesses. Anything from chasing down bills, dealing with client complaints and customer service issues, to handling personnel and human resources matters and fiddling with equipment and office supplies. While all of these things are vital functions of any business and are tasks that do need to be completed, these are a complete waste of time for YOU, the business owner.

This is why every office needs to have someone designated as an office manager. It might not be the sole function of this person, but it's a single person designated to handling the day-to-day operations of your firm. I've seen this position shared by paralegals, executive assistants, and even client service directors. Whoever makes the most sense and is the most qualified with the skillset needed to be an office manager should be the one designated to serve in this position.

Below are the five more specific reasons that every single estate planner needs to have a designated office manager.

Reason #1: An office manager will help keep your office working efficiently.

For the most part, employees prefer *not* to be micromanaged. There are statistics that show that micromanagement of employees lowers morale and can even be extremely



disruptive and actually create a great deal of inefficiency in the office. However, if you allow employees too much room and little accountability, you can also suffer from a great deal of inefficiency in the workplace. An office manager is a great person to have in place to make sure that employees are completing their work in a timely fashion (e.g. estate plans are getting out the door, the necessary equipment is being used to complete tasks, etc.). Most busy professionals do not have the time to oversee these daily operations, so having an office manager in place to make sure that the company is functioning smoothly is an extremely important part to running a successful practice.

Reason #2: An office manager will prevent potential liability and labor disputes.

Another reason to have an office manager in place in your firm is that this person should also be required to create and enforce company employee policies. It is really hard to enforce rules on employees (and discipline them for not following rules and/or maintaining a certain standard of professionalism) if there are no rules or policies in place. For example, while it might seem like a reasonable standard and

expectation that employees show up to work on time, if you have no company policies in place about punctuality, no one checking on it and no possible discipline for tardiness, how can you enforce it? Having an office manager to help you put together policies for the company so that he or she can enforce them will help you going forward should you have any issues with cancerous and/or litigious employees.

This leads me to Reason #3...

Reason #3: An office manager can help to boost office morale.

Ideally, having someone in the role as office manager should help to boost office morale. The reason for this is because now there is someone designated to help defuse conflict in the office. The office manager should take on human resources tasks and serve as a mediator for conflict in the office. The more these types of conflict can be immediately handled, the happier your employees will be and the more productive and efficient they will be in their work.

NOTE: It's very important to add here that in order for an office manager to help boost morale in the office and work properly, that you be sure to put the *right person* in place as the office manager. Ideally, this person should not be married, related or close to you (the business owner) or any other employee either. If the office manager is intended to take over human resources functions and help reduce and handle conflicts in the workplace, you don't want to have all of the issues that come with having relatives, spouses, and close friends involved. It will most likely result in the complete opposite effect you had intended.

Reason #4: An office manager is going to make your clients happier.

Having a designated office manager is going to make your clients' overall experience with your firm better. Why? Because not only will it help provide your firm with structure that will make your employees happier, but it will make the office more efficient and your clients will end up having a better client experience, which is what they'll remember when they leave your office. Happier clients means more client referrals and more repeat business!

Reason #5: An office manager will help you (and the firm) financially.

Last, but not least, an office manager is going to help you (and the firm) financially. How? The office manager should be the designated person in charge to oversee the cash flow and general financial health of the company, daily and month in and month out. This person should report back to you regularly about the financial health, so that you're not having to sit there and compute the numbers or calculate the metrics

around the revenue and profit made each month. Additionally, the designated office manager can and should be incentivized to help find ways to reduce the monthly overhead by seeking better and more financially feasible ways to get things done. And, lastly, instead of you calling clients and chasing after unpaid bills, you now have someone to do it for you. Not only will that be less intimidating and more professional in the eyes of your clients, but it also frees you up to do what you do best.

Hopefully, you now can see how necessary and important it is to have a designated office manager in the office. I can honestly tell you that the more that we continue to assist estate planning attorneys in developing the right team of associate attorneys and support staff, the more I see that this one issue seems to be a big reason why so many practices are not as successful as they could be. The more that you can delegate the overall day-to-day operations to your designated office manager, the more you will start to see your practice thrive!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Kristina Schneider is the current Executive Director of The Ultimate Estate Planner, Inc. She graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Pepperdine University in 2004 and was hired right out of college to work for the Law Firm of Kavesh, Minor & Otis, coordinating and facilitating Philip Kavesh's "Missing Link" Boot Camps while also providing administrative support to Mr. Kavesh as his Executive Assistant for over 7 years. With a combined almost fifteen years of administrative experience and her direct experience working at Mr. Kavesh's law firm, Kristina has been able to assist numerous estate planning professionals through The Ultimate Estate Planner, Inc. And, equally as important, she has assisted the executive assistants and staff members of many of these estate planning professionals to provide better service and support. You can reach Kristina at by e-mail at kristina@ultimateestateplanner.com.



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