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Exceeding Expectations



James T. Towne, Jr., Left; Dr. Benita Zahn, Right

For The Towne Law Firm, P.C., a new approach to work-life balance is the key to providing exceptional client service.

For attorney James T. Towne, Jr., the secret to running a successful law firm can be summed up in two words: *exceed expectations*. Over the years, the phrase has become an informal company slogan at The Towne Law Firm (TLF). While a general practice firm, TLF also practices in some unique niches: auto and truck dealerships, hospitality law for RV parks, equine and gaming law, and Indian law, to name a few. TLF's clients expect to benefit from the firm's broad expertise and attentive service.

For a self-confessed "old-school workaholic" like Towne, absolute dedication to serving clients comes easily. Over the past few years, however, he has come to believe

that there's more to running a successful firm than hard work.

"One of the realizations we had during the COVID-19 pandemic was that we couldn't exceed client expectations if our staff didn't feel supported," says Towne. "That's why we've invested heavily in creating a staff wellness program. Our entire firm benefits so we can take better care of our clients."

Recruiting and retaining staff has been a major challenge at law firms in the wake of the pandemic, and Towne believes that one key reason for this is that firms won't adapt to changing times. He notes that when he began his career over 40 years ago, the only

path to success was to put in more hours. That's no longer the case.

"The younger generation has established a completely different work-life balance," Towne says. "To attract and keep the best staff, it was necessary and important to make real changes."

Wellness Matters

Towne says that the pandemic provided his team with a unique opportunity to test new ideas. True to TLF's slogan, the goal was to ensure the wellness initiative exceeded expectations.

To start, the firm retained noted wellness expert Dr. Benita Zahn to conduct staff interviews. Those discussions led to the firm implementing a series of quality-of-life programs, by providing in-office maternity areas, contributing to student loan payments, and implementing paid sabbatical leave for attorneys and support staff, among others.

One of Towne's most popular ideas was offering to pay for grocery deliveries, allowing the staff to reduce their COVID-19 exposure.

"It just made sense to me," Towne says. "It's worth paying \$20 in delivery fees every week to help keep our employees safe. And we've determined to continue underwriting this expense as it frees

up 90 minutes a week for our employees by eliminating grocery shopping. That time, over 75 hours per year, is a meaningful addition to their free time and will continue post-pandemic."

Providing this level of employee support is not just a good thing to do for employees he cares about, it's good business, Towne says. Attorneys and staff are more productive when they can focus on their work, allowing the firm to grow and thrive. As he sees it, it's a self-reinforcing cycle that benefits both clients and staff.

"We can't ask the team to go above and beyond for our clients if they feel like we don't value them by doing the same as the employer," Towne says. "If we take care of our team, they will inherently exceed expectations and take care of our clients' needs."



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