

Planning Your Law Firm Retreat

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by Edge International

The rapid growth of law firms in the past decade has created some new and unique management difficulties. With firms' size, and the complexity of global legal practices, coordinating the availability of partners to perform any management function beyond routine meeting attendance is increasingly difficult. The values of the partnership model to which many law firms aspire are becoming difficult to achieve in a modern professional service organization. The problem is further compounded in large multi-office firms where partners not only don't know their fellow partners from other offices well, they may not have even met each other.

One solution to these issues for many law firms is a partner retreat. Typically held at a location away from the office, retreats offer law firm partners an opportunity to get to know one another and deal with some of the more complex issues of operating their firm, away from competing practice priorities.

The forms that firm retreats take are as varied as the firms themselves. Retreats can range from little more than tax-deductible vacations to cathartic events. One consistent fact is that the clarity of purpose for the retreat and the quality of planning dictate the value achieved and the level of partner satisfaction about the time devoted to their attendance.

At Edge, we have participated in planning, facilitating and speaking at literally hundreds of law firm retreats. This paper represents our formal attempt to debrief ourselves as to what makes for a successful retreat, what ideas work and which don't and how firms can get the most from the time and money expended in conducting a retreat.

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