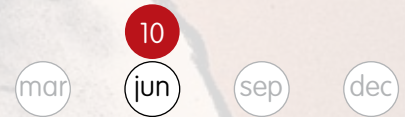


Peer to Peer

Law2020



Peer to Peer June 2010

Celebrating a Happy New Year in 2020

BARRY SCHIFFMAN THE FRAYMAN GROUP

The 1990s were exciting times at law firms. As the technology bubble expanded, the need to diversify practice areas and skill sets was more compelling than ever before. Law firms seized growth opportunities through mergers, acquisitions and aggressive lateral hiring — the structure of the practice had changed forever. Profits per partner reached historic highs, and the path to partnership for young associates became well defined; the sky was the limit. In this dynamic economy, new business was available in every form.

THE PARTY'S OVER

Fast forward ten years to a time of unprecedented uncertainty. The economy was collapsing, and the seemingly certain upward trajectory of law firms took a nasty turn. It began a downward spiral from which there was no easy recovery. Pressures on firms to restructure generations-old billing practices and reduce costs forced heavy personnel layoffs. Once “blue chip” banking clients were keeping more work in-house and hiring less expensive law firms.

The only silver lining in the very dark cloud was the prospect of new clients, particularly for litigation groups.

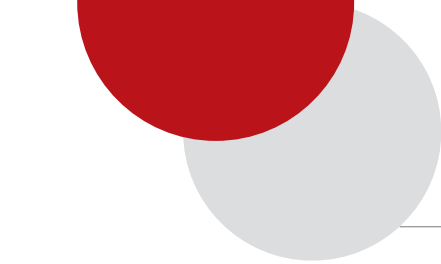
Sadly, many were considered potential conflict risks, given the firm's portfolio of banking and financial institution clients. For many attorneys, there was nothing fun about being a lawyer.

Young associates with partnership aspirations, once excited about a prospective new client, were now ridden with anxiety, and their excitement was ultimately shattered when the new client would not clear the firm's conflicts department. In many instances, the billing attorney had no prior adverse relationship, or knowledge thereof, to the prospective client; but the size of the firm and its antiquated conflicts clearing systems made it next to impossible to adequately gauge risk. As a result, they were unable to accept new business from clients other than the once reliable blue chip clients.

This flawed dynamic left law firms in the dust of the economic recovery. The factors that had once contributed to the growth of firms — their large size and deep pocket blue chip clients — had suddenly become a source of stagnation. In a sense, firms had become victims of their own success.

HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

And now, here we are in 2020, and we can see how times have changed thanks to innovative conflicts clearing technologies. The outdated nature of conflicts systems that once evaluated prospective new business at both The Big Firm and Atticus



Finch, P.C. led firms to realize the need to adopt robust technologies. Features such as natural language search and business analytics would become the cornerstone of their economic recovery.

Law firms view natural language functionality as an essential component of practice management. “The multi-dimensional character of natural language search removes the blinders that were imposed on new business inception by arcane, one-dimensional search functionalities,” according to an AmLaw 50 senior partner. State bar associations impose multi-dimensional conflicts rules — natural language search empowered law firms to look inside all content related to existing and new business and, as such, accordingly manage the risk of new business with a level of dynamism that was, at last, up to date with the requirements of state bars.

Technology has also provided the ability to instantly assess complex business risks alongside ethical ones when taking aboard new business, and has provided a new and modern way of collaborating within the firm during the critical clearing process.

Suddenly, the once anxiety-ridden young associates are excited to bring new clients to the firm with a degree of speed and accuracy that finally balances the needs of the business world with the ethical requirements of practice management.

Today, in 2020, the practice of law is more diverse, exciting, and just plain fun than ever. Technology has converted economic constraints into opportunity — the opportunity to broaden a firm’s client base and specialties, while maintaining the highest standards of ethical practice. It is safe to say that a once bleak outlook on law firm practice has never seemed brighter. **ILTA**