

Getting Lawyers Back to the Office

By: Michael L. Goldblatt

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Thirty-Six years ago, Steven Spielberg produced a Summer blockbuster titled *Back to the Future*. The movie tells the story of a scientist helping a young time-traveler to return home. The scientist's creative use of lightning as a power source shows the benefit of thinking **outside the box**. Law firms can likewise use out of the box solutions to encourage lawyers and staff to return to their offices.

Some lawyers and staff may be reluctant to return to the office due to personal situations or health issues. Others may want to return, but delay because they are concerned about safety issues. Law firms can overcome back to office inertia by adopting strategies that promote engagement, health, and well-being. A successful return to the office can bring benefits like improved creativity, collaboration, and productivity. Following are strategies and resources for motivating your lawyers and staff to return to their offices.

Care. Contact childcare and nursing agencies to find caregivers for employees who need help with young children and elderly family members.

Communication. Use emails and memos to communicate the benefits of returning to the office. Schedule videoconferences to keep workers connected and informed about plans for returning to the office.

Environment. Improve working conditions by reconfiguring workspaces, adding touchless options, and modernizing décor. Create a welcoming environment that makes people feel comfortable and relaxed.

Flexibility. Allow lawyers and staff to work remotely for a few days per week. Give lawyers and staff the ability to select days in the office and reserve workspace.

Fun. Encourage camaraderie with weekly lunches, monthly social events, firm newsletters, and team meetings.

Hygiene. Promote hygiene with hand cleaning stations and mask dispensers. Educate by posting reminder signs and publishing a checklist of action items for health and safety.

Safety - Improve air quality by installing UV lights, upgrading air filters, and increasing air exchange. Schedule frequent cleaning and disinfecting.

Technology. Use HR management software to automate benefit administration, health tracking, and work scheduling.

Wellness. Promote well-being at the office with opportunities for exercise and mediation. Hire nutritionists and trainers for group and one-on-one consultation.

Conclusion. Facilitate a successful return by improving your office environment and adopting programs that promote engagement, health, and wellness. Also, adopt emerging technologies and hybrid workstyles that promote connectivity and productivity. Use the tactics and resources mentioned in this article to facilitate a safe return and make your office a congenial place where lawyers can thrive and clients can be well served.

Resources

Articles

Amsterdam Printing, [How to Engage Your Employees](#), Amerstam Blog, April 29, 2014.
Ron Carucci, [How to Lead Your Team Through the Transition Back to the Office](#), Harvard Business Review, Jun. 16, 2021
Rosemary Kupfert, [Why Do Law Firms Need Human Resource Management Software?](#), Law Practice Today, Aug. 14, 2020
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Te-Ping Chen, [Covid-19 Threatens to Blow Up Law Firms' Intense Office Culture—for Good](#), Wall Street Journal, Aug. 6, 2021

Books

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Julia McGovern and Susan Shelly, [The Happy Employee](#), Adams Media, 2008
Bob Nelson, [Recognizing and Engaging Employees](#), John Wylie & Sons, Inc., 2015

Forms

[Request for Flexible Work Schedule](#), University of Texas
[Remote and Hybrid Work Policy](#), SCM Insurance Services
[Remote Work Policy and Agreement](#), California Employers Association

Software Reviews

Oliver Rist, [Headed Back to the Office? These are the Best Space Management Tools](#), Jul. 15, 2021
Gadjo Sevilla, [Top Contact Tracing Apps to Keep Employees Safe](#), PC Magazine, Sep. 2, 2021

Websites

[Human Resources for Law Firms](#) (FindLaw)
[Institute for Well Being in the Law](#)
[Lawyer Assistance Programs](#) (American Bar Association)
[Managing People](#) (Harvard Business Review)
[Society for Human Resource Management](#)
[Lighter Side](#) (Flaster Greenberg)