

Business & Careers

In any firm, big changes typically start small



Gary Mitchell
The Coach

As any member of a law firm's management team knows, "it's about the implementation, stupid." And change for most is not easy. So there are certain steps you can take when introducing a new program or initiative at your firm. I say to go small and slow to start. There is no need to rock the boat. Slowly and surely build the support.

The first step is obvious; get your managing partner on side. Someone has to champion the cause and help to get buy-in from the partnership. It's going to be very hard if not impossible to get this off the ground without his or her support.

Get to know your lawyers well. Get to know what they like, what motivates

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them, their strengths, weaknesses, what they typically avoid and why. This goes a long way toward earning their respect and being seen as a valuable resource for them to grow their practice.

Identify "early adopters." Once you've taken the time to get to know your lawyers more, it will be easier for you to

identify the people who are quick to try new things. They don't sit around and wait for others to prove something useful. They'll take a chance and give it a shot. Look for these people from various populations in the firm, including law clerks, junior associates, intermediate associates and junior partners. That way when the results start coming in, they can sing the praises for the program among their own peers.

Ensure their success by giving them the support they need to succeed. This could include outside coaches or consultants. In many cases, these lawyers are leading change. Having the outside support ensures a level of confidentiality that will allow them to be fully frank in admitting they don't know it all.

Don't do it alone. Engage others on your management team who are on side with your vision. If you are the only one leading this change, you might be thought of as a rebel or outsider and it could prove to be very challenging.

Be sure to measure your success. Have a system in place that will evaluate this new program. What has changed for the better? How do the lawyers view these results? How has it impacted the bottom line, recruitment, retention? If you don't have an analytical software program, I highly recommend purchasing one.

Once you're achieving success, now shout it out to the entire firm. Make the participating lawyers examples of what is possible. Results have a wonderful way of influencing change. Be clear on what has been accomplished and how and why it makes sense.

Now it's time to conduct a second pilot. Building on the success, choose another group of lawyers to work with. I suggest a practice group or two so that you can include lawyers at various stages in their careers. This group doesn't have to be as "trailblazing" as the first, as they have witnessed success and will need a little less buy-in. But they are not at the end of the scale either, not willing to take any risk.

Once you have conducted two trials, it's time to articulate your big-picture vision.

It is imperative that everyone understands the value proposition. Design it so that every member of your team can see themselves in this new model. They can see the results and have witnessed the change in behaviour among their peers. Champion the early adopters throughout your firm as examples of what is possible. They are your new role models. Some of them will likely emerge as the next generation of leadership, and not only support your vision for change—they'll demand it.

Implement the program firm-wide. You have proven results. You have built your army and you have your generals (practice group leaders) on board. The firm at large will be far more prepared to accept change. You can roll out your program with the full confidence that from demonstrating success in incremental stages, and with continuous communications, the results will be far greater than had you tried this from the beginning on your own.

In closing, in most cases I'm aware of, policies or approaches that have been initiated on a large scale almost always fail. When you are talking about getting people to do things differently, it requires behavioural change which does not happen overnight but takes time. Build the foundation by starting with a small group of people—pilot these new ideas, approaches, or programs with your early adopters. Keep it under the radar for now. Then once you have demonstrated success, articulate it. Repeat. Plant the seeds of change without upsetting the apple cart and look forward to harvest time.

Gary Mitchell is principal at On Trac Coach where he works with lawyers, law clerks and paralegals across Canada helping them to attract more clients and grow their businesses. He is co-founder of Legal A Team, a marketing and management alliance focused on providing support to smaller law firms and solo practice lawyers. Gary's second book Raindance Two: A Blueprint for Growing your Practice is available. He can be reached at gary@ontraccoach.com or 604-669-5235.



JUDICIAL VACANCY ONTARIO COURT OF JUSTICE BRANTFORD

The Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee advises the Attorney General of Ontario on the appointment of Judges to the Ontario Court of Justice, and invites applications for a judicial position in Brantford.

This appointment involves presiding over criminal and family law matters (approximately 75% criminal and 25% family) and also involves travel within the regional boundaries as assigned by the Regional Senior Justice and/or the Chief Justice.

The minimum requirement to apply to be a Judge in the Ontario Court of Justice is **ten years completed** membership as a barrister and solicitor at the Bar of one of the Provinces or Territories of Canada.

All candidates must apply either by submitting 14 copies of the **current (April 2014)** completed Judicial Candidate Information Form in the first instance or by a short letter (14 copies) if the current form has been submitted within the **previous 12 months**. **Should you wish to change any information in your application, you must send in 14 copies of a fully revised Judicial Candidate Information Form.**

If you wish to apply and need a current Judicial Candidate Information Form, or if you would like further information, please contact:

Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee
Tel: (416) 326-4060 Fax: (416) 212-7316
Website: www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/jaac/

All applications, either sent by courier, mail or hand delivery, **must** be sent to:

Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee
c/o Ministry of Government Services Mail Delivery
77 Wellesley Street West, Room M2B-88
Macdonald Block, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N3

Applications must be on the current prescribed form and must be **TYPEWRITTEN** or **COMPUTER GENERATED** and **RECEIVED BY 4:30 p.m. on Friday, November 27, 2015**. **CANDIDATES ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE 14 COPIES OF THEIR APPLICATION FORM OR LETTER**. A Fax copy will be accepted only if 14 copies of the application or letter are sent concurrently by overnight courier. Applications received after this date **WILL NOT** be considered.

The Judiciary of the Ontario Court of Justice should reasonably reflect the diversity of the population it serves. Applications from members of equality-seeking groups are encouraged.



FIRST YEAR LAWYER

Are you looking to join a growing firm? If so, Zarek Taylor Grossman Hanrahan is the place for you.

From our 6 lawyer inception in 1997, we have grown to 40+ lawyers in 2015. We are an insurance defence boutique law firm, located in downtown Toronto, with a demonstrated pattern of excellence in defending tort, accident benefits, property and general insurance matters.

We are currently looking for an **FIRST YEAR LAWYER** to join our growing firm:

What we are looking for:

- Experience with accident benefits will be considered an asset.
- You are a member in good standing with the Law Society of Upper Canada.
- You demonstrate excellent judgment.
- You are able to work well independently as well as in a team environment.
- You possess exceptional organizational skills.
- You are able to work in a fast-paced team environment and meet demanding deadlines.
- You possess excellent written and oral communication skills as well as research skills.
- You are a self-starter.

Salary based on experience. Benefits package available.

Please forward your resume to careers@ztgh.com quoting "Insurance Defence Counsel" in the subject line of your email application.

We thank all applicants. However, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.