

# JUNIOR LAWYER DEVELOPMENT: Joint Training

McMillan Binch LLP

## situation

To provide the best quality legal services, in-house counsel hire lawyers with strong educational credentials. Corporate or large firm experience is a plus too. Unfortunately, not all lawyers join the department well-versed in the language of business or with broad working knowledge across a range of substantive areas.

## in-house counsel challenge

Today's general counsel must do far more with fewer resources. Time and money to train new attorneys is scarce, if not non-existent. Counsel need an efficient, cost-effective way to quickly bring new staff members up to speed.

## approach adopted

In-house counsel should take advantage of their law firms' associate training programs. Firms invest tremendous resources in training their associates and are proud to demonstrate and share that knowledge. During the training, in-house lawyers will not only learn new skills but also interact with experienced senior partners and build relationships with their associate peers. In response to our clients' needs, we invited them to send their junior attorneys to "BinchCamp"—our associate training program. Over six days, we teach participants how to think and act like business lawyers—how to be a deal maker, not a deal breaker. Topics range from understanding financial statements and accounting to negotiation skills and how to structure and unravel acquisition and financing agreements.

## implementation steps

1. Ask your outside counsel about their training programs. Do they include clients? How frequently are they held? How do they go about training?
2. Make sure the firm you select offers all of the fundamentals and the breadth of coverage you desire. The program should encompass both a skill set and a mindset.
3. Who runs the program? A lawyer or a former practicing lawyer? Do they use any outside experts—professors, consultants, etc.?
4. Who else will be in attendance—junior lawyers only? Other clients? (This will help you gauge the level of discussion.)
5. Assess the quality of the takeaway materials—will your lawyers work with and bring back model documents, precedents and other useful tools?
6. If relevant, ask if CLE credit is available upon completion of the training.

## measuring success

General counsel receive immediate positive feedback as young lawyers return to the office well-trained and with a collection of background resource materials and model documents. Off-the-clock discussions with experienced partners and their associate peers further enhance the lawyers' takeaway. We measure success from BinchCamp not only in building strong working relationships with our clients—particularly among our junior lawyers—but also in the growing list of clients who would like to participate.

## future issues to consider

*In-house counsel are increasingly including the "May we participate in your training sessions?" question in their RFPs. The next step may be to consider other synergistic programs which clients and law firms can share—perhaps on-site training geared to the company's business needs (e.g., how to manage a multinational deal team; anatomy of a restructuring).*



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