

# THE AMERICAN LAWYER

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December 1, 2022

## Big Law Leader Calls For More Inclusive Policies Around Business Professionals

Schulte Roth & Zabel co-managing partner Marc Elovitz argues for business professionals to be included in more client-facing activities and treated as equal to attorneys.

By Marc Elovitz,  
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The recent high-profile news of a Big Law marketing and business development team moving from one firm to another highlights that partner moves aren't the only ones that matter. The business departments at Big Law firms are critical to growth, and the best client experiences come from working with multidisciplinary teams. To succeed in an increasingly competitive market, law firms need to break down the barriers that have long stood between their lawyers and business professionals.

The extraordinary adjustments firms had to make during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought a new sense



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of community that was novel to some. For those firms already steeped in a culture of community and a desire to be truly inclusive, where members feel welcomed and supported, the pandemic brought an opportunity to elevate and extend those efforts. The challenge now is to keep that momentum going.

A good start is the words we use to describe our col-

leagues. Let's stop referring to law firm personnel as "lawyers" and "non-lawyers." No one should be defined by what they are not. Law firms employ trained and seasoned professionals in IT, accounting, marketing, administration, recruiting and many other areas. Let's recognize people as the business professionals they are.

Of course this goes beyond nomenclature. Breaking down the barriers between lawyers and business professionals requires inclusivity and engagement. Three specific changes can help law firms move this forward.

**Affinity Groups For All.** Affinity groups have proliferated at all types of businesses including law firms. But if affinity groups create community among underrepresented groups, why do most law firms limit participation to lawyers? Breaking down the barrier between lawyers and business professionals can promote community while still giving opportunities for attorneys to address issues particular

to their positions. At our firm we have found greater affinity where attorneys and business staff are more connected.

**Expanded Professional Development.** Training and mentoring are critical for law firm associates and firms invest substantial resources into this. But law firms benefit when all of their people have opportunities to learn and grow. To provide client service at the highest levels, law firms need to create a learning culture which will attract and retain top talent in all of their functions.

**Inclusive Client Service Teams.** Law firm client service teams can support clients in achieving their goals while

institutionalizing the law firm relationship. Lawyers are typically working closely with clients on a day-to-day basis, but clients should get the benefits that come from working with business professionals in knowledge management, IT, communications, marketing and business development and practice support, among other groups.

Barriers between lawyers and business professionals don't serve either group, and certainly don't serve clients. Law firms have an opportunity to rethink the roles everyone plays as colleagues working together to serve our clients. Individuals, law firms and clients will all benefit from a more connected community.