



WHAT GETS FORGOTTEN WHEN LAW FIRMS MERGE?

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We are starting a research study on what works and what does not in merger integration and are giving initial insights into some of our early research. Thank you to everyone who has already generously given their time for the study.

Firms need to remember that people at all levels matter. Of course, there will be a focus on corporate goals and ambitions that the merger will bring but there is seldom a merger of equals and staff in the smaller firm may fear for their jobs, fear that their responsibilities will change and that their career development will stop.

Appointments for senior roles can be decided pre-merger to help staff at all levels know exactly what is happening.

Morale can and does become a problem and must be addressed. Have robust and fair processes in place that champion the vision of the new firm so staff understand what is happening and why.

Do not procrastinate, communication is key at all levels to engage staff and stop resentment brewing.

Communication needs to be constant, clear, concise, and timely to staff and needs to start early in the process and continue after the merger.

If staff become disenchanted, they will and do walk away. If you lose your top talent your intellectual capital is drained and some of the value of the merger may well be lost.

It is common in the merger process that only partners and directors of support teams have met, so the tiers of staff below that do not feel involved in the process and feel they have no outlet for their fears and to express their concerns.

New relationships to aid integration need to be built and you must facilitate that.

You need to motivate and involve people and inspire them to commit to the new firm.

Remember that this is an emotive time for staff. Quite simply people do not like change. They can be frustrated, angry and anxious.

One of the questions partners will ask is “where do I fit in?” It is no different as you come through the tiers of staff in a firm.

You need to be clear and transparent about what roles are available and what the demands of new roles will be.

When staff interview for the roles available, ensure that when interviews start there are representatives from both businesses and an independent from the project team, so the decision is objective and shared.

Inevitably some roles will be lost but you must treat people with respect and compassion. Ensure that those that are unsuccessful are well looked after and compensated accordingly and if you start this process early on, they have time to find new roles.

If you are a professional service firm that has merged and would like to help our research study, please contact me.

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