Recommended Reading: The Leadership Challenge

by Cordell Parvin on November 14th, 2014

I have been around law firms whose lawyers had differing ideas of the firm’s culture, its vision and what is expected of each lawyer. Those firms are notable by the number of closed door meetings and they are most likely not to survive in difficult times.

Have you read James Kouzes and Barry Posner’s book: “The Leadership Challenge”? I recommend the book to every lawyer because even if you are a young associate in your firm, you are still a leader.

Near the end of the book, Kouzes and Posner suggest that leaders constantly ask themselves:

- What values do we hold dear?
- What visions do we aspire to realize?
- What behaviors do we want to reinforce?

They go on:
Be prepared for every public opportunity to reinforce the culture and the meaning you want to create.

Are your law firm leaders constantly asking these questions? Do your lawyers know what values the firm holds dear, what visions the firm aspires to realize and what behaviors the firm wants to reinforce? Just having clarity on those points will create a synergistic atmosphere.

My friend Roger Hayse, once gave me an idea on how to determine the values your firm holds most dear.

1. Make a list of values (e.g. Integrity, Profits per Partner, Collegiality, Teamwork, Respect, Diversity, Quality Work Product).

2. Then have each of your partners, or each of your lawyers rate the importance of each value on a 1-10 scale.

If your lawyers rate the importance of each value the same or close to the same, then you know what your firm holds most dear. If the ratings for each one are all over the place, it’s time to go back to the drawing boards.

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