**IDEA EXCHANGE: Managing your Remote Secretarial Staff - April 23**

**Moderated by Michelle Doran**

Michelle Doran is a law firm executive with over 20 years of legal management experience solving complex business problems with focus on strategic and growth planning, efficient operations and work processes, data/metric analysis and human resources.

In her current role, as a Regional Director with Dorsey and Whitney LLP, she is responsible for the offices on the east coast, liaises with the Asia practice and serves on several firm wide committees.  As a strategist, she leverages technology, talent, innovation and best-in-class practices to improve revenue and overall operations, while developing and mentoring key personnel.  Michelle prides herself on being an excellent partner/consultant to top tier leaders and establishing relationships with all levels of a multi-tiered, culturally diverse, organization

**Guiding Principles for Managing a Remote Workforce:**

Prioritizing Communication and Building Trust – Employers have to show employees they are flexible. Employers must show patience and understanding for personal issues.

Communicating Expectations – Communicate to your employees when you expect them to work, how often and what your expectations are. How often do you want to communicate with your employees. Emphasize understanding that employees may have childcare issues and anxiety issues over the current situation.

Recognize and incentivize good work – Employees should be thanked often. Communicate to the attorneys the productive work the staff is performing.

Encouraging Work/Life Balance – Encourage employees to separate their work and personal life. Encourage a lunch break and breaks throughout the day.

Collaboration in Work Environment – Employers should find ways to collaborate through technology – Zoom, Jabber, newsletters. Gather information from the workforce and share it.

**Idea Exchange – What People Have Been Doing:**

Group Conference calls and personal calls once a week to check on any personal issues.

Designate a stronger secretary as the go-to person for billing and other issues.

Weekly events on zoom – trivia, name that tune.

Encourage employees to take PTO if a mental health day is needed. Encourage employees to go out during the day if needed for walks to relieve anxiety and stress.

Policy in collaboration with HR for employees to commit to two 3.5 hours blocks of time to work to accommodate childcare issues in place of 7 straight hours. The blocks can be worked over the weekend.

Welcome back to work emails on Monday with some fun content. For example, sharing books read and/or photos taken over the weekend.

Linked In Learning – tutorials and classes to improve technical skills and professional development.

Support Staff Gifts - $25 gift cards, cookies sent to employees’ homes, coupon for a half day off.

Capitalize on the situation and leverage how successful working remotely has been for the future.

Anonymous surveys to employees to zone in on employee concerns and address them in a town hall meeting/conference call – technology worries, financial worries about the firm. Follow up with more detailed questionnaires and discussions.

Repeated communication as worries or issues may not be shared on a first phone call. Make multiple calls to check on employees.

**Tasks to Encourage Employees to be More Productive While Working Remotely:**

File cleanup – removing duplicate files, confirming final versions of files, file naming, pleading headings, contacts for attorneys, active matters list, email cleanup.

Training – taking webinars to improve skills and gain knowledge.

Forward calls to receptionist’s home so he/she can handle calls at home.

Office Services – have these employees alternate going in to the office to check the mail, perform scanning and handle special tasks that may need to be done in the office,

**How are People Capturing Data as to what Employees are Working on:**

Daily task summary report – gather data to identify high task priorities and shift work to others who may not have as much work. This can be used to show the attorneys the productivity of the admin staff.

Report on the number of documents employees have worked on over the past week. This way work can be shifted from busier employees to less busy ones by just reaching out and asking them to assist in specific tasks.

**Onboarding New Employees:**

Microsoft Teams screen sharing.

Buddy system for new employees with more seasoned ones.

Expanded training and orientation using Zoom or Webx.

**Mental Health Issues:**

Identify issues – keep an eye on erratic hours, frequent physical complaints, increased anger, increased sadness, reckless behavior that may be shared.

Recommend and highlight the benefits of EAP programs.

Reassuring and humorous videos from leaders of the organization.