

*Law Firm Administration:
Inclusion vs. Exclusion
and
How to Make Your Voice Be Heard*

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Two types of firms

◆ *Inclusionary*

- *Inclusionary, non-hierarchical firm culture*
- *No caste distinctions between partners & admin staff*
- *C-level execs participate fully in operational decision-making & planning*

◆ *Exclusionary*

- *Exclusionary, hierarchical firm culture*
- *Caste distinctions similar to private club*
- *C-level execs excluded from important discussions*
 - *Admin staff has no “skin in the game”*

Is your firm inclusionary?

- 1. Do C-level execs participate in critical planning?*
- 2. Are C-level execs compensated, at least in part, on basis of firm profitability?*
- 3. Do C-level execs receive same date distributed to partners?*
- 4. Do C-level execs attend partner meetings & retreats?*
- 5. Is COO a member of executive/management committee?*
- 6. Do any C-level execs other than COO play important role on firm committees?*
- 7. Are C-level execs listed on firm website?*

Do C-level execs help develop strategy?

- ◆ *Firm “A”*
 - *40-member leadership group*
 - *Includes 5 C-level administrators and add'l senior staff*
 - *Firm leads its market in revenue & profitability*
- ◆ *Firm “B”*
 - *C-level execs excluded from planning process*
 - *Partners believe discussions re firm's future should be reserved exclusively to partners*
 - *Partners say presence of senior staff would “inhibit candor”*
- ◆ *at your firm . . .*

Are C-level execs compensated on basis of firm profitability?

◆ *Firm “A”*

- *Staff incentive plan includes component based on*
 - *Firm profitability*
 - *Performance in relation to budget*
- *C-level execs have direct stake in operating results*
- *Occasional “surprise” bonuses, e.g., contingency award*

◆ *Firm “B”*

- *Staff incentive plan based on “individual performance” or “market”*
- *C-level execs have no stake in operating results*
 - *Lack of “skin in game” is self-fulfilling prophecy*

◆ *at your firm . . .*

Do C-level execs receive same data as distributed to partners?

- ◆ *Firm “A”*
 - ➔ *C-level execs receive financials, billable hrs, collections & realization data*
- ◆ *Firm “B”*
 - ➔ *C-level execs, especially those below ED/COO/CFO, receive limited data*
- ◆ *at your firm . . .*
- ◆ *In law firms, as in corporate world, access to information reflects your status in the organization*

Do C-level execs attend partner meetings & retreats?

◆ *Firm “A”*

- *C-level execs attend these meetings as matter of course*
 - *Develop close working relationships*
 - *Understand firm’s strategy & culture*

◆ *Firm “B”*

- *C-level execs, especially those below ED/COO/CFO, rarely invited to partner meetings*

◆ *at your firm . . .*

Is ED/COO a member of important firm committees?

- ◆ *Firm “A”*
 - *Executive committee – yes*
 - *Management/policy committee – yes*
 - *Compensation committee – rarely*
 - *But may attend as non-voting observer & resource*
- ◆ *Firm “B”*
 - *Executive committee – non-voting*
 - *Management/policy committee – non-voting*
 - *Compensation committee – no*
- ◆ *at your firm . . .*

Do C-level execs other than COO play role on other committees?

- ◆ *Firm “A”*
 - *Marketing/bus dev committee – CMO*
 - *Technology committee – CIO*
 - *Finance committee – CFO*
 - *Compensation committee – CHRO*
- ◆ *Firm “B” – no*
- ◆ *at your firm . . .*

Are C-level execs listed on firm's web site?

- ◆ *Firm "A" – yes*
- ◆ *Firm "B" – no*

- ◆ *at your firm . . .*

Which firm would you like to work for?

*Firm A?
or Firm B?*

How to make your voice be heard

- 1. Don't be bashful*
- 2. Back up what you say with real-life examples taken from your experience*
- 3. Cite authorities whenever you can*
- 4. Know when to keep quiet, i.e., when not to be heard*

Don't be bashful

- *Express opinions clearly & succinctly*
- *Assume that partners value your judgment & expertise*
- *Be respectful, but act as though you belong at the table*

Back up what you say w/ real-life examples taken from your experience

- ◆ *Law firm leaders often have little or no management experience*
- ◆ *As C-level exec, you have years of hard-earned experience*
- ◆ *Use your experience to both your own & the firm's advantage*

Cite authorities whenever you can

- ◆ *Lawyers respect authority*
- ◆ *They're more likely to pay attention if you support your views w/ academic or industry authorities*
- ◆ *And they'll pay even more attention if your views are consistent with what other firms are doing!!!*

Know when to keep quiet, i.e., when not to be heard

- ◆ *If discussion turns to subject where you have nothing to add, stay silent*
- ◆ *Don't dilute your impact by straying too far from your area of expertise*

C-level execs must both

- ◆ *Lead, and*
- ◆ *Follow*

Finding the right balance is the key.

. . . and now a BONUS tip . . .

If a C-level position is, at least in some respects, the senior staff position in a law firm . . .

What can senior staff people do to succeed? . . .

- 1. Do more than you're asked to do!*
- 2. Help your boss do a great job!*