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A CORPORATE LAW FIRM

**Attorney Laura Anthony  
Highlights  
The Value of Legal  
Administrative Personnel**

**White Paper  
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**MAKE VALUED ALLIANCES**

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## Attorney Laura Anthony Highlights The Value of Legal Administrative Personnel

Regardless of the [economic climate](#), the effectiveness of any [law firm](#) is determined by the proficiency of their support staff. In turn, the proficiency of a law firm's support staff is determined by establishing a clearly defined hierarchy, understanding the strengths and specialties of each admin and maintaining effective communications between the admin team and Senior Partners.

These days, the importance of being prepared is more valuable than ever. We have been shown in no subtle manner that the fundamental business environment we operate in can change entirely without forewarning. The cliched, go-to axiom "expect the unexpected" can be more accurately revised: "prepare for the unexpected."

When systemic social turbulence presents itself, client expectations do not change correspondingly. The same responsibilities exist and [law firms](#), regardless of practice areas, must be able to operate with continuity. Deadlines cannot be pushed down the road, work product cannot be compromised and client communications cannot be negatively impacted.

A well organized, well trained and properly motivated administrative staff can dictate the difference between success and failure. Each [attorney's](#) ability to operate to the best of their ability is tethered to the proficiency of the admin team.

### Chain of Command and Primary Functions

This practice may sound self-explanatory but, since many operational functions are shared responsibilities, true accountability may become obfuscated. Regardless of the task at hand, there must be one person in the group who is on point. In the event of a crossroads scenario, the entire administrative staff must be able to seek guidance and clarification from a single person, without hesitation.

For the most part, the point person has the most experience out of the entire administrative staff as well as the ability to pinch-hit in any admin function. They must know how to do something before the assignment can be delegated.

Traditionally, the top slot on the administrative team is referred to as Operations Manager, [Director of Operations](#), Senior Administrative Coordinator or such. Job titles mean very little in terms of functionality, but this key person must be able to troubleshoot, advise the admin team and confirm that all assignments are completed on or before deadline.

### Ensuring Intra-Office Communication

The top admin must also be able to effectively communicate the status of any and all admin assignments to the corresponding [attorneys](#). Again, a clearly defined chain of command is essential in this capacity.

Should a Partner or Senior Associate need to assess the status of any given assignment, they must know that there is a single go-to person who can bring them up to speed in minutes, not hours.

Of course, in the case of [large law firms](#), there will be a point person for every admin team. Even so, in the tier above each team leader there must be one, possibly two, chief administrators who are ultimately responsible for any and all work products that are generated in the lower administrative tiers.



## Secondary Functions

In addition to coordinating admin assignments, work that is done on behalf of the firm's clients, the senior administrators must also perform numerous functions that support the infrastructure of the firm itself.

Collating client contact information, maintaining a streamlined filing system, knowing how to resolve computer network issues, evaluating new organizational software, vetting vendors, and many other tasks fall into this category. Although much of this work is not truly administrative in nature, it is equally important. These tasks collectively comprise the very health and fitness of the firm, and must be maintained at all times with painstaking attention paid to every last detail.

As the eye in the sky, the chief admin must be able to perpetually evaluate the performance of lower-tier admins and be able to render a succinct, unbiased evaluation to the decision makers at the firm.

[Founding Partners](#), Partners and even Senior Associates will have difficulty evaluating the performance of any single admin since many assignments are shared. These attorneys only see the finished work product and may be unaware of which, or how many, admins worked to complete the assignment.

There are exceptions to this scenario. In an equal number of instances, a [Senior Partner](#) works one-on-one with a specific admin. In this case they can assess the admin's performance and gain insight into that individual's level of business sophistication, strengths and weaknesses.

## Understanding Limits and Limitations

The admin staff is a team. There are specialists, veterans, rookies, well-rounded players and hundreds of personalities attached to each classification. Also, limits and limitations are two completely different things. A limit is the extent of one's ability given their training and experience; a limitation is a boundary that prevents an individual from becoming more proficient at their craft, even with more experience and training. An admin with limits can excel, an admin with limitations has reached their maximum capacity.

Should a task, any task, be assigned to an admin, and the results are lackluster under even the most forgiving light, it must be assessed if the right person was assigned the right job. Jumping to the conclusion that any individual is inept solely based on the results of one assignment is absurd and counterproductive to the [operations and growth](#) of the firm.

Each admin plays a specific role in the collective, so it is imperative to understand their strengths, weaknesses and technical abilities. The running back should not be required to block, the lineman should not be expected to outrun the running back, so on and so forth.

When an assignment is botched, the organic reaction is to fire the responsible party. Terminating the employment of an admin, or any [key personnel](#) for that matter, should be the last course of action, not the first.

By process of elimination, it must be discerned if the wrong person was assigned the task; if the correct person was assigned, the parameters of the task were not clearly communicated; or if the admin simply botched the assignment. If indeed the latter is the true, then it must be ascertained why and how the assignment was compromised.

In the majority of instances such as this, the solution (after the fact) is better, more sophisticated training. Continuing education is imperative for a variety of reasons. The once "weak link" can be transformed into a key player, a new asset previously unrealized. By elevating this one individual, the morale of the entire admin team has been elevated.

## Cross-Training Ensures Consistency

Offering continuing education to non-attorney personnel is a smart-money investment. Whatever the firm pays is recouped in superior efficiency. This also creates an opportunity to round out the skill sets of various non-attorney personnel in addition to keeping the entire admin staff up to date on all technological developments in office management software.



In addition to the tangible benefits, the opportunity for admin staff to participate in continued education generates a spirit of opportunity; there is room to grow and what was previously perceived as a dead-end job is now considered a career, because it is.

These continuing education classes and seminars should be carefully selected so that staff members with rudimentary, but important, [skill sets](#) can be groomed into multi-faceted admin professionals. Since hiring key personnel has always been an arduous task, educating the personnel you already have can produce tremendous benefit to the firm.

The importance of [cross-training](#) can never be emphasized enough. Unexpected situations occur, people become ill, workloads increase dramatically, and a thousand other things can and will occur that require the admin with the best organizational skills to step into the shoes of the admin with superior analytical abilities. Examples are too numerous to document, but each admin personnel must be able to pinch hit at a moment's notice as a stop-gap measure.

This ensures continuity of [business](#) while a permanent solution can be solidified.

## Knowing When to Say When

As previously stated, terminating the employment of non-attorney personnel is a last-resort measure. Since this is a very serious decision, there are several questions that must be considered before doing so:

1. Has every possible effort been taken to integrate the admin into the team?
2. Are they a new hire that just doesn't fit, or are they a long-term employee in a production spiral?
3. Is the basis for terminating the admin due to a personality conflict or their overall inefficiency?
4. Is the admin compromising the goodwill and morale of their co-workers?
5. Is an inordinate amount of time spent managing this individual or correcting their work?
6. Was their work product and performance previously superior, or did they never actually hit their stride at the firm?

Once these questions are answered and it is indeed necessary to terminate the admin, it must be done in a procedurally correct and highly professional manner. No control person enjoys firing an employee, but it must be kept in mind that the longer the admin is permitted to operate in their current position, the longer they are being prevented from finding a more suitable job or entirely new career path.

Keeping an employee on your team while knowing they are dissatisfied with their position, is doing them a tremendous disservice. Once it has been established that they are not suited for their position, prolonging their employment is detrimental to their future as well as the firm's.

The administrative staff is the team that ensures the overall functionality of any [law firm](#). If they are well organized, well trained and properly motivated, the firm is more likely to prevail. Should the firm be suddenly inundated with a substantially larger caseload or encounter unforeseen setbacks, the strength and proficiency of the admin staff is an insurance policy that protects clients, attorneys and fellow employees.



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[Palm Beach securities attorney Laura Anthony](#) and her experienced legal team provide ongoing corporate counsel to small and mid-size private companies, OTC and exchange traded public companies as well as private companies going public on the Nasdaq, NYSE American or over-the-counter market, such as the OTCQB and OTCQX. For more than two decades [Anthony L.G., PLLC](#) has served clients providing fast, personalized, cutting-edge legal service. The firm's focus includes, but is not limited to Regulation D and Regulation S and PIPE Transactions, securities token offerings and initial coin offerings, [Regulation A/A+ offerings](#), as well as registration statements on Forms S-1, S-3, S-8 and merger registrations on Form S-4; compliance with the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, including registration on Form 10, reporting on Forms 10-Q, 10-K and 8-K, and 14C Information and 14A Proxy Statements; all forms of going public transactions; mergers and acquisitions including both reverse mergers and forward mergers; applications to and compliance with the corporate governance requirements of securities exchanges including [Nasdaq](#) and [NYSE American](#). Palm Beach attorney Laura Anthony is also the author of [SecuritiesLawBlog.com](#), the producer and host of [LawCast.com](#), Corporate Finance in Focus, and a contributor to The Huffington Post and Law360.

[Ms. Anthony](#) is involved throughout the community of Palm Beach. She is on the board of directors for the American Red Cross for Palm Beach and Martin Counties, and provides financial support to the Susan Komen Foundation, Opportunity, Inc., New Hope Charities, the Society of the Four Arts, the Norton Museum of Art, Palm Beach County Zoo Society, the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts and several other organizations. She is also a financial and hands-on supporter of Palm Beach Day Academy, one of Palm Beach's oldest and most respected educational institutions. She currently resides in Palm Beach with her husband and daughter.

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