

BUSINESS & CAREERS

How to know if you should stay or go

It's the time of year when many partners take stock of their position at firms and how their practice fared. Moreover, as the legal profession continues to adapt to a global environment, firms are changing their market position, outlook, and objectives heading into 2012. It is imperative that partners assess their objectives against the firm's potentially changing goals.

Here are seven questions to assist partners in determining what the appropriate next step is in their practice development.

1 Do you like what you do?
It surprises me how frequently this basic question is overlooked by partners. All too frequently, I speak with partners who have an excellent handle on the inequities of the firm's point allocation system, the challenges of the practice group dynamics, and their battles with other law-



THE HEADHUNTER
WARREN SMITH

yers, both senior and junior, within the firm. While these may weigh on overall happiness, the starting point for all career assessments is whether you like the core of your practice. There is little sense in trying to fix all the other variables if, once resolved, at the heart of your job is something you no longer want to do. The key here is to be brutally honest with yourself: If you could wave a magic wand and all the external challenges associated with your practice could be eliminated, would you still want to do what you are doing? Only if the answer is yes does investing the time and resources to maximize your practice platform make sense.



ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

2 Do you like who you are with?
While no team is perfect, it is important to take stock of your team members and assess whether it is a group you look forward to seeing every day. One bad apple may not necessarily

spoil the bunch, but don't underestimate the significant negative impact one player can have on the team dynamic and, in turn, your overall job satisfaction. If there is an offending team member, are there steps that can be taken to remedy the situation? If

they can't or won't be taken, then these people will slowly eat away at your job satisfaction. Often, the offending party has been talked to repeatedly about their challenging personality traits; if the conversation is recurring and unchanging, you should consider whether it is more fruitful to get away from this person, rather than risk perpetual frustration.

3 Do you like where you are?
I've encountered numerous partners who have found geography to be a factor in assessing their career objectives. Whether it is the relocation of a major client, children pursuing higher education overseas or a desire to practice closer to home, the question of where best to develop your practice is an important consideration.

See **Evaluate** Page 26

DORIAN N. PERSAUD

EMPLOYMENT LAWYER | WORKPLACE INVESTIGATOR

Associate – Employment Law

THE FIRM

Dorian N. Persaud is a respected employment lawyer operating a boutique practice in downtown Toronto. Dorian advises employees, executives, small and medium sized businesses, First Nations, religious and other non-profit organizations, and is also regularly retained to conduct workplace investigations. The practice is built on providing creative legal solutions to employment issues including wrongful dismissals, harassment and human rights.

THE ROLE

Dorian is looking for a talented Associate who can commit at least 20 hours per week to join our team on a contract basis, with potential for this role to evolve into a full time position.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Canadian law school graduate
- Called to the Bar within the last 2-3 years (preferred)
- Experience in employment law and/or litigation at a reputable firm
- High aptitude for writing and editing legal articles
- Demonstrated community involvement
- Strong interpersonal and client service skills

To apply, please submit a resume and cover letter to resume@boustreethr.com. Please indicate "Associate – Employment Law" in the subject line. We thank all applicants for their response but only those considered for an interview will be contacted.

ASSOCIATE POSITION Insurance Defence

McCALL DAWSON OSTERBERG HANDLER^{LLP} is seeking an associate lawyer with up to three years experience to work with senior counsel. Insurance defence or personal injury experience is preferred. Excellent academics, good interpersonal skills and a solid work ethic are essential.

McCALL DAWSON OSTERBERG HANDLER^{LLP} offers high quality work, significant responsibility and genuine mentorship.

Reply in confidence before December 30, 2011, to:

Sheila Handler
McCall Dawson Osterberg Handler^{LLP}
Suite 301-114 Dundas Street,
London, ON N6A 1G1
Tel: 519-672-2108, ex. 229
Fax: 519-672-2436
email: shandler@mdolaw.ca

McCall
Dawson
Osterberg
Handler

Barristers

Lakehead UNIVERSITY

Founding Dean, Faculty of Law

Lakehead University is conducting an extensive search for a Founding Dean, Faculty of Law, to take office at the earliest opportunity, and no later than the summer of 2012, and invites expressions of interest, applications and nominations.

Lakehead is a comprehensive university with a reputation for innovative programs and cutting-edge research. With campuses located in Thunder Bay and Orillia, Lakehead has approximately 8,100 students and 2,250 faculty and staff. Known for its multidisciplinary teaching approach, and its emphasis on collaborative learning and independent critical thinking, Lakehead offers a variety of degree programs at the undergraduate, Master's and Doctoral levels, as well as on-campus and community-based programs, continuing education and distributed learning. Home to the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (West Campus) and located at the head of Lake Superior, Lakehead's Thunder Bay campus is one of the most beautiful in Canada. Many of its programs in engineering, education, arts and sciences are complemented by fieldwork and a focus on northern socio-economic issues. Please visit www.lakeheadu.ca.

Fully approved, funded and supported, the JD degree program offered by the new Faculty of Law will provide an emphasis on working with Aboriginal peoples to address the legal needs of Aboriginal communities in the north, legal issues related to the resource-based Northern Ontario economy, and increasing participation in sole and small firm practice. The Faculty of Law will be located in Thunder Bay's historic Port Arthur Collegiate Institute and will be admitting 55 students yearly, with its first class graduating in 2016. Reporting to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), the Founding Dean, Faculty of Law will be responsible for all academic, administrative and external activities of Ontario's first new law school in 42 years.

The Founding Dean of Law at Lakehead University will be a legal educator and scholar with experience that is relevant to Aboriginal, northern and rural legal issues and interests. In addition to possessing a Law degree at the graduate level, candidates should have an open and collegial style, outstanding management, communication and interpersonal skills, a creative approach to problem solving, the ability to inspire staff, faculty and students, and the capacity to build and sustain positive work relationships with academic and other administrative units. The ability to promote and serve as an advocate for the Faculty of Law's mission, goals and ongoing accomplishments will be essential.

Lakehead University is an equal opportunity employer. Applications, including a letter of introduction, curriculum vitae, and the names of three references (who will not be contacted without consent of the applicant) should be emailed, in confidence, to: Lakeheadlawdean@lavernesmith.com

Laverne Smith & Associates Inc.



www.lavernesmith.com

BUSINESS & CAREERS

When goals diverge, dust off your resume

Evaluate

Continued From Page 25

4 Where is the team going?

It is important to assess the compatibility of your practice goals with those of your partners. For example, if your best clients tend to be focused on mid-market transactional matters, whereas your firm is focused on chasing blue-chip clients and an increasingly global brand, this may cause pressure down the road.

While you may enjoy the company of your partners today, if their longer-term goals are ultimately incompatible with yours, it may lead to discomfort at the partnership table as your respective practices diverge. Can you modify your practice to meet the firm's goals? Do you want to? Can the firm make allowances for your practice in a way that does not disrupt the overall focus? The key is to ensure you understand where your team is headed, and whether this is a direction that serves your clients' needs and your personal goals.

5 Does your opinion matter?

Perhaps the single most determinative factor is whether his or her opinion matters. Whether it is a result of the firm's international power base shifting to a different market, a change in the composition of the executive committee, or a shifting focus to different key areas, the evolving nature of law firm priorities can leave some partners feeling out in the cold. Understand what issues within your practice need proper attention in order for you to have continued success; if the firm is unable or unwilling to provide you with a climate that respects those needs, it is likely you will begin to feel your opinion no longer matters.

6 Are you properly compensated?

Compensation remains a

key consideration. However, some may be surprised to discover that financial issues, while relevant, are rarely determinative in leading a lawyer to change firms. Invariably, compensation systems are a reflection of a shared value system among the partners. Most understand there is an inexact element to attributing compensation based on a shared value system; hence, \$10,000 variances rarely result in departures. However, gross discrepancies, radical shifts in attribution models, and changing practice styles (both by the firm and the lawyer) can lead to significant disparities between a lawyer's perceived value to the firm and his or her compensation. These issues can be compounded when a firm shifts its market focus. For example, if a firm seeks to top-grade its practice, this may increase operating costs to be more consistent with its desired market presence. This may affect those lawyers who feel they don't need the additional expense to service their current clients. Similarly, when a firm seeks to encourage new client activity by increasing origination credits, this may affect those lawyers whose primary function is file carriage; they may come to see the firm as undervaluing their contribution, resulting in a growing disparity between their perceived value and the firm's assessment of their contribution.

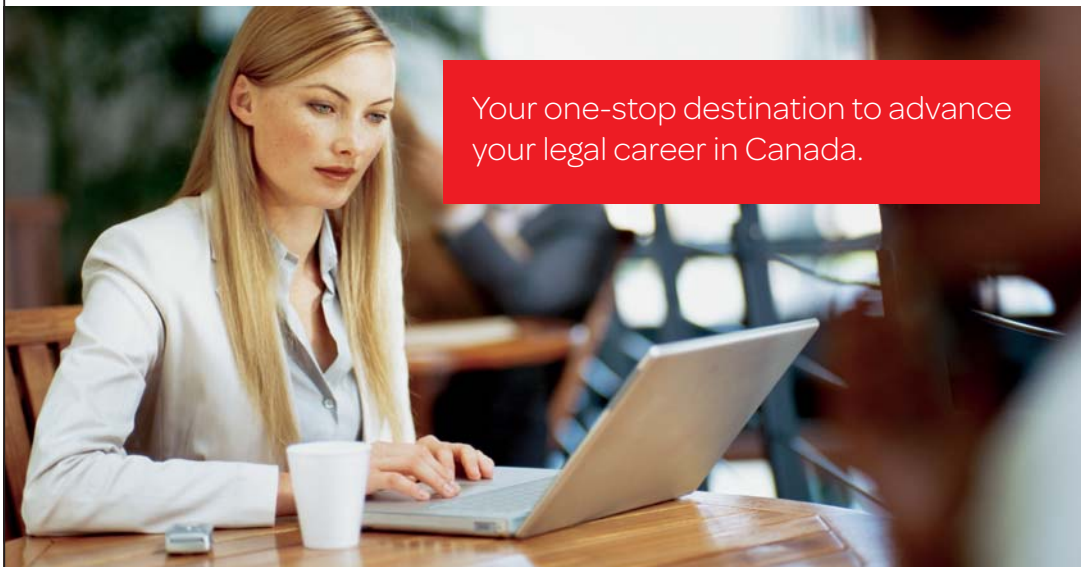
The key here is to understand where your practice strengths lie and compare them against what the firm's compensation model both measures and rewards. If your contributions are not being properly measured, there may be an opportunity to better calibrate the process. However, if your contributions are being measured but not rewarded, this may be the result of a diverging value system between you and the firm; in such a circumstance, re-evaluating your relationship with the firm may be required.

7 Is something better out there?

There are two requisite elements in creating a move—push and pull. Not only must there be a clear, unresolvable deficiency in the lawyer's situation, there must be a superior alternative to move toward. The key here is to take stock of your situation, understand what is working for you, what your challenges are, and where there is the greatest opportunity to move your career forward in a manner consistent with your goals. ■

Warren Smith is a managing director of lawyer recruitment and career consulting firm *The Counsel Network*. He is the only Canadian elected to the board of directors for the National Association of Legal Search Consultants. Twitter: @lawheadhunter.

TotalLegalJobs.ca



Find and apply for a job today! Many exciting new positions are listed right now:

- [In-House Counsel \(Niagara Region\)](#)
- [IP Litigator \(Downtown Toronto\)](#)
- [In-House Litigation Lawyer \(Regina\)](#)
- [Real Estate Partner \(Toronto\)](#)
- [Patent Agent or IP Lawyer \(Montreal\)](#)

[More ...](#)

Set up your profile and upload your résumé.

Employers are searching the database for the right candidates.

Create job alerts so you never miss a new posting.

Follow us on Twitter (www.twitter.com/TotalLegalJobs) to get valuable career information and immediate notification of new job postings.

Now you can search for jobs using your smartphone at m.totallegaljobs.ca.

