

## [Open Communication: Do Lawyers in Your Firm Know...?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on August 7th, 2012

When I practiced law, I always wanted to be a part of a collaborative firm striving to be the best firm it could be. My old law firm had many talented lawyers, but it was not a “collaborative” law firm. We were a group of lawyers with unique talents, opportunities and dreams. We just happened to be in the same firm at the same time. Back then I read a phrase written about the US and Soviet Union relationship:

The foundation of cooperation is not really trust, but the durability of the relationship.

I felt our leaders never articulated a clear vision and got buy-in from the partners. Looking back now, I can laugh about the time we hired high-powered consultants and paid them over \$3 million, only to discover very few of our partners bought into their recommendations. I wish I had a recording of one of our “town hall” meetings.

I felt the durability of our relationship depended on effective communication and understanding. I once asked firm leaders: How many of our partners know...



1. how firm leaders define” success” and how we are doing?

2. where firm leaders want to take the firm and what their plan is to take us there?
3. what is our culture and how is it different from other firms?
4. what each of our practice groups and offices do?
5. what is expected of partners?
6. which of our clients are the largest and most important?
7. our largest clients' industries?
8. what work we are doing for our largest clients, and what additional work we could be doing?
9. what innovative things some of our lawyers are doing to attract and retain their best clients?
10. who are our top associates and what motivates them?
11. what we are doing to train and develop our associates?
12. what, other than billable hours, is expected of our associates?
13. what we are doing to raise the satisfaction of our clients?
14. what we are doing to obtain better business?
15. what our best clients think about our work and our service?
16. how we are perceived by law students, firm alumni and lawyers in other firms?

Not surprisingly, very few of our partners knew the answers to those questions. Do your partners?

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