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Week of **September 22, 2009**

How to Keep from Getting "Riffed"

The English language is marvelous in its ability to change and adapt. In recent months I've heard more than a few people express fear of, or commiserate over, a RIF. I was unfamiliar with the term and went to Wikipedia, where I found that the letters stand for a Reduction In Force. The really sad thing is that there are variations on this acronym, such as IRIF (involuntary reduction in force), VRIF (voluntary reduction in force), eRIF (email reduction in force), and WFR (work force reduction). According to Wikipedia the abbreviation is often pronounced like the word *riff* rather than spelled out. It's sometimes used as a verb, as in "the associates at that firm were pretty heavily *riffed*."

Because so many lawyers and law firm staffers have become victims of the economy, the stigma of a layoff seems to have been lifted. Though don't tell that to the hard-driving, personality type AAA lawyer, or to the staffer who has been given just a week or two of severance. The definition of recession is when *someone else* is laid off; the definition of a depression is when *you* are laid off. In other words, when the problem comes close to home, we just might go into "panic" mode. Until then, we tend to be sanguine; it's *their* problem, not *mine*.

How to keep from getting riffed? Here are suggestions that I believe will benefit every lawyer.

- Take some deep breaths and assess your situation. Think through what you do for your firm piece by piece and assess how you can do it better.
- Look at your personal expenditure numbers. What do you need to live on and to keep your law practice operating? Be open and honest with yourself. Consider where you are in the economic spectrum and think about reducing where you need to in order to keep your head above water.



Looking for a way out?

Presented by Edward Poll

(3-DVD set, Published by LawBiz® Management, Co., 2009)

Exit Strategy: Selling & Other Strategies to Leave the Practice of Law reveals insider information that is sure to go a long way to help achieve optimal results while transitioning out of the practice of law. Throughout this 3-DVD set, viewers will learn about valuing and pricing a firm, marketing its sale, and other post-sale considerations.

[Click here to purchase this 3-DVD set at the special introductory price of \\$197.00.](#) Regular price is \$247.00 as of 10/31.

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- Review your revenue numbers. Have they decreased because your clients are also in panic mode? Is there something you can do to help them by "partnering" with them or deferring a portion of your fee as long as they pay a base minimum? Or maybe you can find another creative billing alternative? If so, perhaps you can save both the relationship and the revenue.
- After considering the pros and cons, the revenues and expenditures, and the alterations of life style as may be required, make a "to do" list. Be very specific. If others can help you achieve certain tasks (whether for a fee or as a favor) to expedite your recovery and deliverance from panic mode, ask and delegate. Be quick and effective and leave pride aside.

Getting rified is not inevitable. There is hope if you think through your situation and reach out for help. It's the first step to getting and retaining new clients who see the value of what you provide so that you can weather the storm and come out the stronger for it.

Personal Commentary

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Best wishes,

Ed Poll
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"I look at Ed as my business partner now—my once-a-week essential business meeting to take the pulse of my practice. During our one-hour phone conversations, we hash out the larger and smaller business challenges of my law firm. I always come away from those conversations enlarged, challenged, and sometimes even quite shaken, but with the tools necessary to move forward down the path he and I are constantly redefining for me and my firm."

-AL, Northern California

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