

Briefs

HOLIDAYS ■ PERFORMANCE ■ HIRING ■ IN MEMORIAM

Lawyer Relaxation Tips During the Holidays

The year is winding down and the holidays are upon us. Perhaps this is the best time to take some vacation from your law practice. Taking time off may seem like more trouble than it is worth, but vacation time is valuable for boosting productivity and morale. Robert Half Legal provides five tips for a stress-free period away from the office.

1. PLAN AHEAD.

Give advanced notice of your vacation plans. This will give you time to review workloads, allocate resources and bring in help if necessary.

2. PROVIDE DETAILED UPDATES.

Once your vacation time has been finalized, give your team a detailed record of your projects, their status and next steps to create a smooth transition for your time away.

3. IDENTIFY A BACKUP.

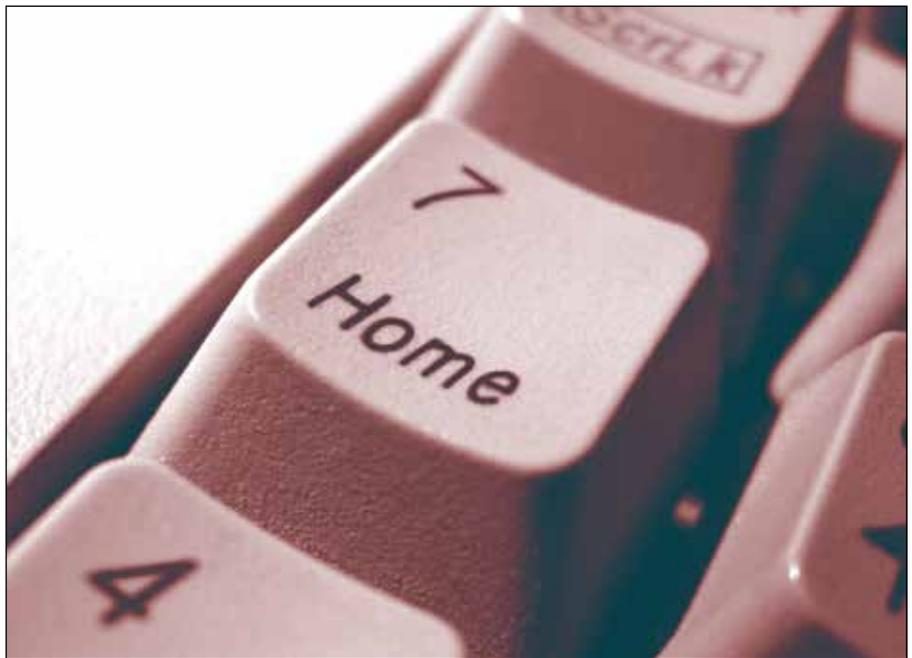
Designate a trusted coworker to serve as your alternate on your projects to keep them on track. Make sure to offer to return the favor, though, when your coworker takes their own vacation time.

4. LEAVE THINGS IN ORDER.

Leave your workspace neat and orderly and leave instructions for where and how to locate files. If appropriate, turn project materials over to your trusted designee.

5. TURN ON YOUR OUT-OF-OFFICE MESSAGES AND SET LIMITS.

Update your voicemail greetings and email settings to notify others that you will be away. Provide contact information for your designee as the



go-to for any requests so they can be addressed in a timely fashion. However, if you feel compelled to check on the status of your projects, try to limit the amount of time you spend doing so.

When you eventually return to the office, make sure to give yourself some

time, preferably a day or two, to catch up on emails. Meet with your team to get updates on project priorities and new business. Finally, remember that the rest you get during vacation will make you a better worker when you return and that planning ahead goes a long way. ■

Focus Shifts to Firm Performance for 2016

There will be more focus on the performance of individual law firms in 2016, according to The Legal Intelligencer. A slow down in growth of law firms in 2015, against 2014 numbers, has led legal observers to predict that segments (Am Law 50, 100, 200) will be less impor-

tant for firm success than actual firm performance. With the industries that firms serve consolidating and evolving, rules are changing. Revenues are down across the board, and demand for services is shrinking causing competition to increase and forcing firms to cut down on their outside spending.

In 2014, according to *The Legal Intelligencer*, Am Law 50 firms were performing better than Am Law 100 that were performing better than the Am Law 200 firms. However, the 2015 numbers paint a picture of “winners” versus “losers” with niche and boutique-sized firms showing the most revenue growth. These firms outperformed Am Law 50 firms that actually had the least revenue growth for 2015. Firms that are doing well, like those niche and boutique shops, are rethinking their businesses to adapt to the changing legal environment.

Consolidation of industries, increasing interest rates and outside forces like China’s volatile stock market will all create challenges for law firm success in 2016. However, the firms that will be successful will be those that have adapted their business models and compensation plans to adjust to the

changing industry. The segments that have been past indicators of success are not necessarily predicted to be indicators going forward.

Pennsylvania law firms in the Am Law 100 and Am Law 200, according to *The Legal Intelligencer’s* sources, had growth of roughly 3.5 percent from 2013-2014. Pennsylvania’s largest firms also did better in 2014 than those in some other markets, like New Jersey. However, sources say that the best Pennsylvania firms can expect for growth is within the 0-3 percent range for 2016. For more information, read the full article in the *The Legal Intelligencer’s* PaLAW 2015 at <http://www.thelegalintelligencer.com/id=1202743246307/More-Focus-Expected-on-Individual-Firm-Performance>. ■

Optimistic U.S. Business Owners Plan More Hiring and Raises for Employees

Small and mid-sized business owners nationwide are increasingly optimistic about the prospects for their own businesses and more expect to increase hiring and wages for their employees over the next six months, according to the latest PNC Economic Outlook Survey findings.

The fall findings of PNC’s biannual telephone survey reveal that one in four expect to hire additional full-time employees, the most since 2012 and second highest since 2007. Forty-two percent, meanwhile, intend to increase employees’ pay, which is the most since 2007. One in four businesses also say they have hired in the last six months – a significant increase over the 18 percent in the spring.

This positive outlook is bolstered by a decline in pricing pressure, in part due to the sharp drop in energy prices. Twenty-eight percent plan to charge higher prices this year, down from 38 percent one year ago. For prices charged by suppliers, 50 percent expect price hikes this year compared to 62 percent last year.

Owners, however, are also finding it increasingly difficult to hire qualified workers. The survey shows that 34 percent say it has become harder to hire qualified employees than it was a year ago. One in 10 who are not hiring say that it is because they cannot find the right skilled workers.

OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK, PROFITABLE YEAR

Nearly nine out of 10 owners are optimistic about their company’s overall prospects – an increase from 83 percent in the spring. At the same time, 76 percent are optimistic about their local economy, the highest number since 2007, but 67 percent are optimistic about the U.S. economy.

Ninety percent of business owners say they will at least break even this year, including 70 percent who believe they will make a profit. The average profit is about 7 percent of sales. Only 6 percent expect a loss.

FINANCING NEEDS REMAIN LIMITED

Although expectations for business prospects are promising, loan and credit demand continue on a slow path upward. Eight out of 10 owners say they will not pursue new loans or lines



IN MEMORIAM

Joan M. Roll
Aug. 22, 2015, age 56

Joseph R. Danella
Oct. 5, 2015, age 88

Albert S. Shaw Jr.
Aug. 27, 2015, age 87

Hon. Nancy Goodwin Bolan (ret.)
Oct. 11, 2015, age 64

Robert Howard Levin
Aug. 28, 2015, age 69

Martin Techner
Oct. 18, 2015, age 92

Frederick S. Patti
Sept. 8, 2015, age 83

Owen A. Knopping
Oct. 20, 2015, age 75

Lynn Zeitlin
Sept. 10, 2015, age 74

Richard B. Schwartz
Nov. 1, 2015, age 80

Thomas Bell Rutter
Sept. 27, 2015, age 79

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of credit in the next six months while 18 percent will. When asked about access to credit, 23 percent say it is easier and only 12 percent say it is harder now compared to three months ago. ■

Methodology

The PNC Economic Outlook survey was conducted between July 21 to August 20, 2015, by telephone within the United States among 1,883 owners or senior decision-makers of small and mid-sized businesses with annual revenues of \$100,000 to \$250 million. The results given in this release are based on interviews with 520 businesses nationally, while the remaining interviews were conducted among businesses within the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio and Pennsylvania plus Washington, D.C. Sampling error for the national results is +/- 4.3 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. The survey was conducted by Artemis Strategy Group (www.ArtemisSG.com), a communications strategy research firm specializing in brand positioning and policy issues. The firm, headquartered in Washington D.C., provides communications research and consulting to a range of public and private sector clients.

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- Former Federal Prosecutor
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