

# Why is your staff jumping ship?

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There used to be a time when lawyers stayed with the same firm from junior associate level up the ladder to partner status. While some attorneys still choose to pursue this traditional path to the top, more lawyers explore their options before settling into one particular firm. In fact, high turnover is a concern through the legal profession, leaving law firm owners and administrators to wonder why their lawyers are abandoning ship.

To be fair, high turnover is not specific to the legal community. Across most industries, statistics show that workers are more likely to work at various companies for shorter periods of time. Gone are the days when employees spend 20 or 30 years with a single company, and here are some of the reasons why:

1. **Poor job satisfaction.** Employees want to take pride in the work they do on a daily basis, and they desire positions that provide a sense of satisfaction. When there is a lack of fulfillment, complacency seeps in, leading many workers to look elsewhere for more enjoyable opportunities. Within a law firm, monotonous case work often causes employee dissatisfaction. You can attempt to alleviate this problem by allowing associates to work in practice areas they enjoy, even if only occasionally or on a pro bono basis. You can also solicit input from your attorneys about firm policies and potential cases. When employees feel that their voices are valued, they are more likely to stick around.
2. **Work-life imbalance.** Law firms are notorious for their lack of work-life balance, often stemming from unreasonable billable hour requirements. Remember that your attorneys are also people, with families, physical and emotional needs. An overworked attorney is one who cannot nurture their support system at home, get in a necessary workout or sleep at night. You may end up with an entire firm of depressed and unhealthy lawyers, who lacks focus. More and more attorneys are recognizing the value of an appropriate work-life balance and they are willing to go elsewhere to find it. Take a critical look at your

practice. Do you have systems in place to support your lawyers and promote healthy living? If not, you could eventually find your best assets walking out the door.

3. Advancement opportunities. For most lawyers, partner status is the cherry on top of the cake, on top of the great big corporate ladder. It's the ultimate goal and one that needs to feel reasonably attainable. While the road to partner varies among firms, some practices make this goal painstakingly difficult and time consuming. Fed up with what feels like a lack of advancement opportunity, a talented lawyer may begin looking for more favorable partnership tracks, perhaps within a smaller or more progressive legal practice. How does the path to partnership look within your firm? Graduated opportunities for title advancement and greater compensation can go a long way in fostering feelings of achievement and goal attainment among your ambitious lawyers.

You can't stop your attorneys from seeking employment elsewhere, but you can create a law practice environment that provides a sense of satisfaction and appreciation.

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**About Erika Winston:**

*Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, The Legal Writing Studio, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.*