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Handling Conflict with Confidence: Strategies for a Harmonious Office

Conflict is inevitable in any workplace, and as an office manager, it's your responsibility to handle disputes effectively to maintain a harmonious and productive environment. Successful conflict resolution requires understanding, patience, and the right strategies. Here's how you can manage and resolve conflicts among your staff.

Understand the Root Causes

Before you can resolve a conflict, you need to understand what's causing it. Conflicts can arise from various sources,

such as personality clashes, miscommunication, differing values, or competition for resources. Take the time to investigate and understand the underlying issues. This insight will help you address the root cause rather than just the symptoms.

Promote Open Communication

Encourage open communication in your office to prevent misunderstandings and miscommunications from

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escalating into conflicts. Create an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their concerns and viewpoints. Regular team meetings, one-on-one check-ins, and an open-door policy can foster transparency and trust.

Actively Listen to All Parties

When a conflict arises, it's essential to listen to all parties involved. Active listening means paying full attention, acknowledging their feelings, and understanding their perspectives without interrupting or judging. Show empathy and validate their emotions. This approach helps build trust and demonstrates that you are committed to finding a fair resolution.

Stay Neutral and Objective

As an office manager, it's crucial to remain neutral and objective when mediating conflicts. Avoid taking sides or showing favoritism. Focus on the facts and the issues at hand rather than personal biases. Maintaining neutrality ensures that all parties feel heard and respected, which is essential for a fair resolution.

Address Conflicts Early

Don't let conflicts fester. Address issues as soon

as they arise to prevent them from escalating. Early intervention can help resolve minor disagreements before they turn into major disputes. Approach the involved parties promptly and discuss the situation in a private and neutral setting.

Encourage Collaboration and Problem-Solving

Encourage the conflicting parties to collaborate on finding a solution. Facilitate a problem-solving session where they can express their viewpoints, discuss their concerns, and brainstorm possible solutions. Guide the conversation to ensure it remains constructive and focused on resolving the issue. Collaboration fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the agreed-upon resolution.



Focus on Interests, Not Positions

In conflict resolution, it's important to focus on the underlying interests of the parties rather than their stated positions. Interests represent the needs and concerns that motivate their positions.

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By understanding and addressing these interests, you can find solutions that satisfy everyone's core needs. This approach often leads to more sustainable and mutually beneficial resolutions.

Establish Clear Guidelines and Expectations

Set clear guidelines and expectations for behavior and conflict resolution within your office. Ensure that all employees understand the company's policies on respectful communication and conflict management. Having established protocols provides a framework for addressing conflicts and helps prevent misunderstandings.

Mediate When Necessary

As an office manager, you may need to step in and mediate conflicts that employees cannot resolve on their own. Mediation involves facilitating a structured conversation between the conflicting parties to help them reach a resolution. Ensure that

the mediation process is fair, respectful, and confidential. Your role is to guide the discussion, keep it focused, and help the parties find common ground.

Follow Up on Resolutions

After a conflict has been resolved, follow up with the involved parties to ensure that the agreed-upon solutions are being implemented and that the conflict does not reoccur. Check in regularly to monitor the situation and provide ongoing support as needed. Following up demonstrates your commitment to maintaining a

Effective conflict resolution is essential for maintaining a harmonious and productive office environment.

positive work environment and helps prevent future conflicts.

Provide Training and Resources

Equip your team with the skills and resources they need to manage conflicts effectively. Offer training sessions on communication, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution techniques. Providing these tools empowers employees to handle disagreements constructively and reduces the likelihood of conflicts escalating.

Lead by Example

Your behavior sets the tone for the entire office. Model



effective conflict resolution by handling disputes calmly, fairly, and respectfully. Demonstrate active listening, empathy, and a problem-solving mindset. When employees see you managing conflicts effectively, they are more likely to adopt similar approaches.

Create a Positive Work Environment

Fostering a positive work environment can help prevent conflicts from arising in the first place. Promote teamwork, recognize achievements, and encourage a culture of respect and inclusion. A supportive and collaborative work environment reduces stress and tension, making it less likely for conflicts to occur.

Effective conflict resolution is essential for maintaining a harmonious and productive office environment. By understanding the root causes of conflicts, promoting open communication, staying neutral, and encouraging collaboration, you can resolve disputes constructively. Remember, as an office manager, your approach to conflict resolution sets the standard for your team. By handling conflicts effectively, you contribute to a positive and cohesive workplace where everyone can thrive. ■



The Heroine with a Headcount: Handling the Disruption Diva

By Lynne Curry

Question:

We thought we'd hit the jackpot when we hired "Sonali." She possessed all the right skills, and her interview dazzled. My manager said, "I love her fresh thinking. Keep her happy; we need her."

The trouble surfaced in week three. Sonali pinged me on Slack. "FYI—our ticket system's outdated. I built a new one in Notion. Should triple velocity. Want a peek?"

I'd built the system, but replied, "Terrific initiative. Let's talk after you've mastered the current setup." Sonali sent back a thumbs-up, plus a 25-page proposal.

Over the next month, she lobbed makeover plans at multiple processes. I spent hours outlining why each current system worked and what data we'd need before tinkering. She ignored my notes and pivoted to new "overdue updates."

She also missed two critical deadlines. When I texted, "Let's discuss," she emailed a lengthy post-mortem blaming "legacy processes." Before we met about the first miss, she racked up a second. When we held our meeting, she tagged the two long-term employees who had trained her as the culprits.

At the end of month two, she DM'd the entire team a salary-calculator spreadsheet titled "Know Your Worth," cc'ing me "for transparency." She sent the same spreadsheet to HR—attached to a raise request. When HR declined, citing internal equity, Sonali then encouraged two colleagues to "assert market parity."



Four weeks later, she'd filed two more raise requests and booked a skip-level with my boss to "share leadership bottlenecks."

I returned from a trip to a manager eager to "overhaul" ops. The stress has wrecked my sleep and blood pressure. If Sonali wins free rein, I'd rather quit than fight the wake she creates. Am I overreacting?

Answer:

When you hired Sonali, you onboarded a disruption diva—rocket-smart, ambition-fueled, and allergic to waiting her turn. Unchecked, they hijack focus, exhaust colleagues, and redraw org charts with charm

and spreadsheets. They use whatever leverage they have—often their highly-prized talents and ability to ignite others' self-interest. Under the guise of "driving innovation," they quickly tilt the power dynamic.

They access their manager's manager. They don't need an open door. They squeeze through cracks. Slow feedback loops only fuel their fire. While you're gathering facts, they've seized the mike and shaped the story. Their version spreads—often virally—framing themselves as the only one with clarity while everyone else plays catch-up.

Disruption divas know how to play to an audience. They position themselves as truth-tellers—visionaries who just want to "help"—while undercutting the people doing the work. They have radar for managers who crave fresh thinking or respond to flattery.

Spot-the-Diva Checklist

Given what you've written, you're already in deep trouble. Here's how to tell if you've hired a heroine with a headcount, before it's too late.

Collateral critiques: Their solutions arrive packaged with finger-pointing footnotes.

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Crowdsourced confirmation:

They share salary data, Glassdoor screenshots, or anonymous survey links to rally allies. They ignite others' discontent.

Skip-level messaging:

They direct feedback north, undercutting their immediate manager and before giving their peers a chance to adjust sideways.

Containment Protocol

You can prevent a new hire from adding "Senior VP of Pot-stirring" to their job description if you establish early guardrails.

Lock the runway.

During onboarding, specify that all employees need to learn your systems and meet "mastery milestones" before they suggest improvements. Otherwise, some new hires want to implement changes that work for them, in preference to learning your systems.

Install guardrails. Create a standing "innovation hour" or Idea Backlog channel with an intake form. Give legitimate concepts their due. Sonali may

have had a point about your ticket workflow. Let your other employees comment and if you make chances, create team feedback. In other words, don't cede the driver's seat.

Document: Each slipped deliverable triggers a written recap: expectation, gap, action plan, deadline. Disrupters can't out-story a paper trail.

Clarify pay philosophy—early. Share your comp bands and review cadence on day one. Transparency deflates spreadsheet activism.

employees [inflate project costs by 17 percent](#). Translation: by keeping one disruption diva, your manager risks losing three exhausted performers who bail. Frame your thoughts as risk management. If your manager gives Sonali free rein, he'll see critiques escalating and morale tanking.

The bottom line

Turbulence ignored never smooths out. Protect your other employees or chart your own flight plan.

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A life-changing, self-training manual for navigating difficult conflicts and situations

*No one understands how to handle and manage conflict like **Lynne Curry**, and no one writes about it better. If you ever have to deal with conflict (and you will), Curry's book helps you identify and improve how you handle conflict. This is a must read.*

— Sean Eichrodt, Securities and Investigations Management, The GEO Group



Order Now!

What now?

Prioritize your physical and mental health over any job. However, before you toss in the towel, give your manager some facts. Bring a one-page timeline of Sonali's missed deadlines, side quests, and hours diverted, plus recent survey findings that high-maintenance

Data Security 101: Protect Your Office and Avoid Costly Breaches



Data security is a crucial aspect of managing any office, no matter the size or industry. As an office manager, ensuring that your organization's sensitive information is protected from breaches, leaks, and unauthorized access is a top priority. Here are some best practices for data security to help you safeguard your office's data effectively.

Understand the Risks

The first step in data security is understanding the potential risks. Data breaches can occur due to various reasons, including weak passwords, phishing attacks, malware, and insider threats. Knowing the types of threats your office might face will help you implement the most appropriate security measures.

Implement Strong Password Policies

Weak passwords are one of the most common vulnerabilities.

Ensure that all employees use strong, unique passwords for their accounts. A strong password typically includes a mix of upper and lower case letters, numbers, and special characters. Consider using a password manager to help staff generate and store complex passwords securely. Also, enforce regular password changes to add an extra layer of protection.

Use Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)

Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) adds an additional layer of security by requiring users to provide two or more verification factors to access an account. This can include something they know (a password), something they have (a security token or smartphone), or something they are (biometric verification like fingerprints). Implementing MFA significantly reduces the risk of unauthorized access.

Regularly Update Software and Systems

Keeping your software and systems up-to-date is vital for data security. Regular updates often include patches for security vulnerabilities that could be exploited by hackers. Ensure that all operating systems, applications, and security software are updated regularly. Set up automatic updates whenever possible to streamline this process.

Encrypt Sensitive Data

Encryption is the process of converting data into a code to prevent unauthorized access. Encrypting sensitive information, both in transit and at rest, ensures that even if data is intercepted or accessed without authorization, it cannot be read or used. Use encryption tools for emails, files, and any other data that needs to be securely transmitted or stored.

Educate Your Team

Human error is a significant factor in many data breaches. Regularly educate your team on data security best practices, including recognizing phishing attempts, avoiding suspicious links, and the importance of securing devices. Create a culture of security awareness where employees feel responsible for protecting sensitive information.

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Implement Access Controls

Not all employees need access to all data. Implementing access controls ensures that individuals only have access to the information necessary for their role. Use the principle of least privilege, granting the minimum levels of access needed to perform their job functions. Regularly review access rights and adjust them as needed.

Backup Data Regularly

Regularly backing up data ensures that you can recover information in the event of a data breach, system failure, or other incidents. Store backups in a secure, offsite location and test them periodically to ensure

they can be restored when needed. Having a robust backup strategy minimizes downtime and data loss.

Develop an Incident Response Plan

Despite your best efforts, data breaches can still occur. Having an incident response plan in place helps you respond quickly and effectively to security incidents. Your plan should outline the steps to take in the event of a breach, including who to notify, how to contain the breach, and how to recover compromised data. Regularly review and update your incident response plan to ensure it remains effective.

Monitor and Audit Systems

Regular monitoring and auditing of your systems can help detect suspicious activity early. Implement tools and processes to continuously monitor network traffic, user activity, and access logs. Set up alerts for unusual behavior and conduct regular

audits to identify potential vulnerabilities.

Use Secure Communication Channels

Ensure that all internal and external communications involving sensitive information are conducted through secure channels. Avoid using personal emails or unsecured messaging apps for work-related communications. Instead, use encrypted email services, secure messaging platforms, and virtual private networks (VPNs) for remote access.

By implementing these best practices, you can significantly enhance the data security of your office. Remember, data security is an ongoing process that requires vigilance, regular updates, and continuous education. By staying proactive and informed, you can protect your office's sensitive information and maintain the trust of your clients and employees. ■

The Must-Have Software Every Office Manager Should Know

In today's fast-paced work environment, office managers need a suite of reliable software tools to streamline operations, enhance productivity, and ensure smooth communication. Choosing the right software can make all the difference in efficiently managing tasks, schedules, and team



collaboration. Here's a guide to the essential office software every office manager should consider incorporating into their workflow.

Project Management Software

Key Players: Trello, Asana, Monday.com

Project management software helps you keep track of tasks, deadlines, and team progress. These tools

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The Must-Have Software Every Office Manager Should Know

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provide a visual overview of projects, making it easier to delegate tasks, monitor progress, and ensure nothing falls through the cracks.

Why You Need It:

- Organizes projects and tasks
- Facilitates collaboration among team members
- Provides real-time updates on project status

Communication Tools

Key Players: Slack, Microsoft Teams, Zoom

Effective communication is crucial for any office manager.

Communication tools like Slack and Microsoft Teams allow for instant messaging, file sharing, and video conferencing, making it easier to stay connected with your team, whether they're in the office or working remotely.

Why You Need It:

- Enhances team collaboration
- Supports remote work and virtual meetings
- Streamlines communication channels

Document Management Systems

Key Players: Google Workspace, Microsoft Office 365, Dropbox

Managing documents efficiently is vital for maintaining organization and ensuring easy access to important files. Document management systems help you store, share, and collaborate on documents in real time, reducing the risk of losing important information.

Why You Need It:

- Centralizes document storage
- Facilitates real-time collaboration
- Ensures secure access to sensitive documents

Time Management and Scheduling Software

Key Players: Google Calendar, Microsoft Outlook, Calendly



Time management software helps you schedule meetings, set reminders, and manage your calendar. These tools are essential for keeping track of appointments, deadlines, and ensuring efficient use of time.

Why You Need It:

- Streamlines scheduling and calendar management
- Reduces scheduling conflicts
- Enhances time management and productivity

Accounting and Finance Software

Key Players: QuickBooks, Xero, FreshBooks

Keeping track of the office's finances is a critical aspect of your role. Accounting software simplifies invoicing, expense tracking, and financial reporting, helping you manage the office budget effectively.

Why You Need It:

- Simplifies financial management
- Automates invoicing and expense tracking
- Provides detailed financial reports

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software

Key Players: Salesforce, HubSpot, Zoho CRM

CRM software helps you manage interactions with clients and track customer data. These tools are invaluable for maintaining customer relationships, tracking sales, and improving customer service.

Why You Need It:

- Enhances customer relationship management
- Tracks sales and client interactions
- Improves customer service and satisfaction

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The Must-Have Software Every Office Manager Should Know

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Human Resources (HR) Software

Key Players: BambooHR, Gusto, Zenefits

HR software assists with managing employee data, payroll, benefits, and performance reviews.



These tools are essential for streamlining HR processes and ensuring compliance with employment regulations.

Why You Need It:

- Simplifies HR management
- Automates payroll and benefits administration
- Tracks employee performance and compliance

Cybersecurity Software

Key Players: Norton, McAfee, Bitdefender

Protecting your office's data

is paramount. Cybersecurity software provides protection against malware, viruses, and other cyber threats, ensuring that your data remains secure.

Why You Need It:

- Protects against cyber threats
- Ensures data security and privacy
- Prevents data breaches and cyber attacks

Workflow Automation Tools

Key Players: Zapier, Microsoft Power Automate, IFTTT

Workflow automation tools help you automate repetitive tasks, saving time and reducing the risk of errors. These tools can integrate with various software applications, streamlining your workflow.

Why You Need It:

- Automates repetitive tasks
- Enhances efficiency and productivity
- Reduces the risk of human error

Note-Taking and Organization Apps

Key Players: Evernote, OneNote, Notion

Keeping track of ideas, meeting notes, and important information is crucial. Note-taking apps help you organize notes, create to-do lists, and store information in an easily accessible format.

Why You Need It:

- Organizes notes and ideas
- Provides easy access to important information
- Enhances productivity and organization

Choosing the Right Software

When selecting software for your office, consider factors such as ease of use, integration capabilities, and scalability. It's essential to choose tools that fit your office's specific needs and can grow with your business.

Final Thoughts

Investing in the right software can significantly improve your efficiency as an office manager. These tools help you streamline operations, enhance communication, and ensure smooth workflow management. Stay updated with the latest software trends and continuously evaluate your tools to ensure they meet your office's evolving needs. By equipping yourself with the right software, you'll be well-prepared to handle the challenges of modern office management. ■

Related Reading

- <https://creativeofficemanager.com/choosing-and-using-project-management-software-a-guide-for-office-managers/>
- <https://creativeofficemanager.com/office-technology-upgrades-that-pay-for-themselves/>
- <https://creativeofficemanager.com/best-practices-for-data-security/>

Tech Training That Sticks: Empowering Your Team with New Tools

Implementing new tools in the office is an exciting opportunity to boost productivity and streamline operations. However, the success of these tools depends not only on their functionality but also on how well your team adapts to them. As an office manager, effective training is key to ensuring that your staff can use new tools efficiently and confidently. So, how do you go about training your team on new tools?

Start with Clear Objectives

Before diving into training, define what you want to achieve. Identify the specific skills and knowledge your team needs to use the new tools effectively. Setting clear objectives helps focus the training sessions and ensures that all necessary aspects of the tool are covered. It also provides a benchmark for evaluating the success of the training.

Choose the Right Training Format

Different tools and different teams may benefit from various training formats. Consider options such as in-person workshops, online tutorials, or

hands-on practice sessions. In-person training allows for interactive learning and immediate feedback, while online tutorials can be accessed at any time. Hands-on sessions are particularly effective for tools that require practical application. Choose the format that best suits your team's needs and learning preferences.



Provide Comprehensive Training Materials

Ensure that your training materials are thorough and accessible. This might include user manuals, quick-reference guides, and video tutorials. Make these resources readily available so that staff can review them as needed. Well-prepared materials can serve as ongoing references and help reinforce the concepts taught during training sessions.

Offer Hands-On Practice

One of the most effective ways

to learn is by doing. Provide ample opportunities for hands-on practice with the new tools. Create scenarios that mimic real-life tasks your staff will perform using the tools. This practical experience helps solidify their understanding and allows them to troubleshoot issues in a supportive environment.

Encourage Questions and Feedback

Create an open environment where staff feel comfortable asking questions and providing feedback. Encourage them to voice any concerns or difficulties they encounter during the training process.

Addressing these issues promptly can prevent frustration and ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Schedule Follow-Up Sessions

Training shouldn't be a one-time event. Schedule follow-up sessions to address any additional questions or challenges that may arise after the initial training. These sessions can provide an opportunity for staff to deepen their understanding, revisit

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Tech Training That Sticks: Empowering Your Team with New Tools

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tricky aspects of the tool, and share their experiences with their peers.

Monitor Progress and Provide Support

Keep track of how well your staff is adapting to the new tools. Monitor their progress and provide additional support where needed. Offer one-on-one assistance or small group sessions for those who may need extra help. Regular check-ins can help identify and address any ongoing issues, ensuring that everyone is comfortable and proficient with the new tools.

Recognize and Reward Success

Acknowledge and celebrate

the efforts of those who embrace the new tools and demonstrate proficiency. Recognition can motivate others to engage more fully with the training and adopt the new tools more readily. Consider rewards such as public recognition, certificates, or small incentives to highlight their achievements.

Stay Updated and Adapt

As tools and technologies evolve, so should your training approach. Stay informed about updates and new features, and adapt your training materials and sessions accordingly. Continuous learning and adaptation are key to maintaining proficiency and making the most of the tools at your disposal.

Conclusion

Training staff on new tools is an essential part



of ensuring a smooth transition and maximizing the benefits of technology. By setting clear objectives, choosing the right format, providing comprehensive materials, offering hands-on practice, encouraging feedback, scheduling follow-ups, monitoring progress, recognizing success, and staying updated, you can equip your team with the skills and confidence they need to excel. Effective training leads to better tool utilization and a more productive, engaged team. ■

How to Implement a Leave Donation Program for Disasters

When one staff member faces a serious personal crisis—a medical emergency, natural disaster, or family tragedy—it often sends ripples through the whole office. Colleagues want to help, but don't always know how. A leave donation program



can offer a practical and compassionate way for staff to support each other during tough times by voluntarily donating

their unused paid leave to coworkers in need.

What Is a Leave Donation Program?

A leave donation program allows employees to contribute their accrued paid time off (PTO)

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How to Implement a Leave Donation Program for Disasters

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or vacation days into a shared pool, or directly to a specific coworker, to help someone who has exhausted their own leave due to a qualifying personal hardship. These programs can be especially meaningful in smaller law offices, where teamwork and trust are the bedrock of the workplace culture.



Step 1: Get Leadership Buy-In and Legal Guidance

Before rolling out the idea, check with leadership and your legal counsel to ensure the program aligns with company policies, employment laws, and payroll systems. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) doesn't prohibit leave donation programs, but issues like taxation, leave accrual, and plan fairness can get tricky. Legal input is essential—especially if you're dealing with salaried exempt employees or unionized staff.

Step 2: Define Clear Eligibility Criteria

Next, establish what types of situations qualify for leave donations. Common examples include:

- Major illness or injury (employee or close family member)
- Recovery from surgery
- Natural disaster or fire
- Domestic violence situations
- Loss of a family member

Decide whether employees must apply or be nominated, and whether documentation (such as a doctor's note or insurance claim) is needed to verify eligibility.

Step 3: Decide on the Program Structure

There are two main types of leave donation programs:

- **Individual-to-Individual:** Employees donate hours to a specific coworker.
- **Pooled Bank:** Employees donate into a general bank, and qualifying individuals apply to use time from it.

Each approach has pros and cons. A pooled program is often easier to manage and protects employee privacy. Individual donations can feel more personal but may create inequities if one person receives much more support than another.

Step 4: Set the Rules

To keep things fair and compliant, establish clear program rules, such as:

- Minimum and maximum donation amounts
- How frequently donations can be made
- How donated time is used (e.g., only for full days, not hourly)
- Whether unused donated time is returned to donors or held for future use
- Whether participation is voluntary and confidential

You'll also need to coordinate with payroll to track the movement of hours between employees accurately.

Step 5: Communicate with Compassion and Clarity

When you're ready to introduce the program, provide a clear explanation of how it works, who qualifies, and how to participate. Make sure employees understand that donating time is entirely voluntary, and that personal details about the recipient will be handled with discretion.



This is also a good time to reaffirm the values behind the program—mutual support, compassion, and community.

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How to Implement a Leave Donation Program for Disasters

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Step 6: Handle Requests Privately and Respectfully

If someone applies for donated leave, respect their privacy. A small review committee—such as HR and a senior partner—can handle approvals discreetly.

Keep any public messaging focused on the spirit of giving, not the details of the employee's situation.

Step 7: Monitor and Adjust

Once the program is up and running, track how it's used. Are people donating? Are requests being handled fairly? Are there administrative hiccups? Gathering feedback from employees can help you fine-tune the process so it remains sustainable and helpful long-term.

A Small Gesture, a Big Impact

A leave donation program isn't just a policy—it's a powerful expression of workplace solidarity. In a profession known for long hours and high stress, it sends the message that no one is alone in a crisis. By making it possible for coworkers to support each other in meaningful ways, your law office can foster a culture of generosity and care that benefits everyone. ■

