

UPDATE

Quality of Life Committee

The business impact and health of the firm to be the focus of the Quality of Life Committee in 2025

By Brian Cox

Healthy lawyers contribute to a healthy law firm, and a healthy law firm is attentive to doing what it can to ensure the well-being of its lawyers – all with the objective of providing consistent, high-quality service to clients and achieving positive business impact, growth, and continuity.

A business culture that considers and promotes good health – physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, and financial – benefits everyone: each attorney, the wider firm, and its clients.

This symbiotic relationship was the insight that prompted the Primerus Quality of Life Committee to extend its focus from the health and wellness of individual attorneys to the broader health and wellness of overall firms.

“We now have the opportunity to recognize the importance of clearly linking the wellness of the individual with the wellness of the firm,” says Scott McLean, who is General Counsel and Director of Practice Management at Mann Lawyers LLP in Ottawa and has worked with the Quality of Life Committee since its inception three years ago.

The Quality of Life Committee is part of Primerus’ Quality Assurance Board (QAB), which was established to assist Primerus in the governance of the

professional responsibilities of member firms. The QAB identifies and provides the procedures, mechanisms, systems, and tools by which to make member firms more qualitative and innovative for the benefit of clients and the legal industry. Current initiatives of the QAB include the institution of cybersecurity standards for all member firms and the Quality of Life Committee’s initiative of identifying and implementing measures to improve the quality of life for attorneys, on both the professional and personal level.

As part of that mission, the Quality of Life Committee initially focused on addressing health and wellness issues concerning the individual. The COVID-19 pandemic was ongoing and there were wide concerns across the legal industry about issues surrounding work-life balance, loneliness, stress management, substance abuse, and suicide.

“Professional wellness is impacted by many factors that span different dimensions, including the physical, financial, environmental, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social, and vocational,” says Iker Dieguez, a partner at Cacheaux Cavazos & Newton in Mexico City. “A situation that is affecting an individual in any of these areas could affect the firm’s performance as a result

of its impact on productivity, interaction with colleagues, and the quality of the work and services received by the clients.”

Wellness is something a firm should not neglect, Dieguez says. A firm must be proactive and use its mission, vision, and policies to promote wellness among its attorneys and consequently achieve better overall business results.

In its first year of existence, the committee organized webinars featuring experts on a wide range of health and wellness subjects. The following year, the committee invited members of Primerus firms to share their personal experiences dealing with health and wellness challenges.

Now, as the committee enters its third year, it is ready to take the next step and shift its focus to issues surrounding the health and wellness of firms.

The first webinar will be held in April and will discuss financial education, addressing such topics as how to manage resources to live within your means; how to make important financial decisions and investments; the importance of setting realistic goals; how to prepare for short term and long-term needs or emergencies.

“Raising awareness and providing resources on these topics is important

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for the wellness of both the firm and the attorneys,” says Dieguez. “We want to make sure that we focus on issues that are current and relevant to regain the interest of Primerus members.”

Dieguez points to mentorship as an example of another area that can be effectively used to boost both individual and firm performance.

Other upcoming webinars will look at factors that contribute to firm culture and how to manage career development inside the firm.

A firm’s health and wellness can be measured by many factors, according to Dieguez and McLean, including its

economic outlook, its age and retention of new talent, and its generation of new business. Questions to consider may include: is the firm top-heavy with too many generals and not enough soldiers? Is its marketing effective? Are people happy working at the firm and are they motivated and engaged? What are the firm’s prospects for five or 10 years in the future?

“There are a ton of things you can measure to gauge a firm’s health,” says Dieguez.

“For each one of those issues you have to establish a policy and then you have to test that policy as to whether it’s meeting

your other concerns and demonstrating that it is possible to marry the health and wellness of the individual, the health and wellness of the firm, and the health and wellness of the client,” explains McLean.

He encourages firms to assess whether their policies align with the “care and feeding” of their members and clients.

“Can you say that your firm policies are good for both ends – lawyers and clients?” he asks. “It doesn’t help if the firm and the lawyers are not understanding the impact of one on the other and the fact that you have to treat and care for both.”

