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# BOWDITCH

ATTORNEYS

## Longtime law firm takes innovative approach to attracting, retaining talent



With more than 100 years of history under its belt, Bowditch & Dewey now has three Massachusetts offices — located in Boston, Framingham and Worcester — and more than 60 attorneys. Part of the firm's secret to success: attracting and retaining top talent, particularly lateral attorneys. From individualized, hands-on business development support and technology solutions to careful hiring for the right strategic fit, Bowditch prides itself on being open and transparent in the hiring process. The effort has paid off, with firm attorneys committed to making the firm last for another 100 years.

Managing partner Robert D. Cox Jr. recently sat down with Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly.

**Q: What is the firm's approach to attracting and retaining top talent?**

**A:** Competition for talent is tremendous and we work very hard at bringing people into the firm and making a long-term home for the attorneys that come here. We spend a lot of time up front, talking about what we can do for them and what they can do for us, to make sure our needs match those of the folks we are recruiting so that the arrangement works out for both parties. We provide individualized, hands-on business development support and we train attorneys on how to generate business.

**Q: What sets Bowditch apart from other, similar firms?**

**A:** We are very much focused on transition planning and building the next generation of talent. We run our firm like the business that it is and we are not afraid to talk about business issues in

our plans for the future. We also ensure that every attorney has a business plan — or a transition plan if they are closer to retirement — which puts us ahead of other firms.

**Q: How would you describe the firm's culture?**

**A:** Our firm has been around for more than 100 years and the partners are planning to have the firm around

together a business development plan, working together with the other lawyers throughout the firm and the business development team. Practice area leaders make sure to welcome laterals and establish a line of communication about how the experience is going and what we can do to make it better. Most studies show that a significant number of laterals end up back in the market after a few years, but that is not happening here. Our

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for another 100. We see ourselves as stewards for the organization and we make decisions for the firm's long-term health. This commitment to legacy causes us to run our business differently, fosters loyalty, and contributes to our caring and generous culture. And while we celebrate those aspects of the firm that have worked over the years, we also recognize that things change and modernize when necessary.

**Q: Marketing and business development are critical for lawyers. What is Bowditch doing to provide support and opportunities for its attorneys?**

**A:** We position our up-and-coming lawyers as thought leaders in the communities they operate in, with articles, speaking engagements, and blog posts. We recognize legal and business development successes both internally and externally, and we are always working on how to bring in new clients and better service our existing clients. We know that our business development strategy is working. In 2018, we saw double-digit increases in the practices of our younger lawyers.

**Q: What opportunities does Bowditch offer to its newer attorneys to get involved in firm management?**

**A:** We are transparent about how the firm operates and how we are doing financially. We are responsive to feedback and give a voice to our attorneys in how the firm is run. Associate compensation, for example, was driven by feedback from our associates.

**Q: How does the firm help lateral hires transition successfully?**

**A:** Our administrative management team does a fantastic job making sure lateral transitions are as smooth as possible. Hiring and recruitment are a very transparent process. Before arrival, each lateral hire is assigned to a partner mentor, who will serve as an advocate. This is a voluntary role and we make sure there is a good fit. Each lateral is required to put

laterals stay with the firm and have been very successful. It takes a lot of work to successfully integrate lateral attorneys, but we've learned how to do it and do it well.

**Q: How is Bowditch using technology to help its attorneys grow their practices?**

**A:** We align our technology investments with the goals of better serving our clients and making it easier for our employees to work from anywhere. Our internal Technology Innovation Council is a group of eight people at all levels of the organization and they strive to make sure we have the technology to operate effectively and provide superior client service. We recently upgraded our website and marketing messages, and established a strong social media presence, including five blogs. We continuously improve processes through automation and new tech. This year we are upgrading to Office 365 and moving to a cloud-based document management system.

**Q: In which areas are you recruiting?**

**A:** We are continuing to focus on our core groups: litigation, real estate, environmental law, trusts and estates, labor and employment, and business. We are always seeking to add depth to each of those practice areas, which in turn creates more specialties within. For example, I'm an environmental lawyer, but I have a deep practice dealing with contaminated properties and wastewater regulation and permitting.



**Robert D. Cox Jr.**  
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