



Maximizing Pro Bono to Achieve Attorney Professional Development and Law Firm Well-being Goals

Ways to Advance New Collaborations with Pro Bono

Getting Started: Gathering Information

- ☐ **1.** Assess my team's functions and activities to identify points of entry for pro bono.
- ☐ **2.** Identify the actors. Who manages:
 - ☐ **a.** Pro Bono. How does pro bono fit within firm structure? Does my firm have pro bono counsel, partners, committee, or some combination? Who delivers pro bono messages? How does leadership engage with pro bono as a firm value?
 - ☐ **b.** Volunteering/Community Service. CSR/social responsibility/social impact teams? HR? Office managers?
 - ☐ **c.** Charitable Giving. Who manages the relevant portfolio of giving and/or sponsorship? Does my firm have an overall strategic focus?
 - ☐ **d.** Well-being. Who manages wellness efforts at my firm? HR, PD, office managers, specific committee, designated staff or some combination?
 - ☐ **e.** Other functions to consider?
- ☐ **3.** Identify firm policies and context.
 - ☐ **a.** Does my firm have a pro bono policy? Does my firm offer billable hour credit for pro bono or have other structures in place relevant to my potential project?
 - ☐ **b.** What is important to firm leadership regarding professional development, well-being, pro bono, and overall corporate social responsibility?
- ☐ **4.** How can pro bono contribute? Consider the following objectives (and others!):
 - ☐ **a.** Develop skills or improve competencies
 - ☐ **b.** Boost camaraderie, morale, and connectivity
 - ☐ **c.** Combat burnout
 - ☐ **d.** Improve and strengthen culture firm-wide (or in specific office)
 - ☐ **e.** Retention
 - ☐ **f.** Improve or connect with firm's external brand and messaging, provide stronger storytelling, create positive visibility in the community
 - ☐ **g.** Break down silos at my firm

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Identify Obstacles

- ☐ **1.** Lack of time and resources
- ☐ **2.** Silos
- ☐ **3.** Lack of interest in pro bono work or well-being initiatives
- ☐ **4.** Resistance to change

Review Pro Bono Realities

- ☐ **1.** Assess: is there a pro bono need?
- ☐ **2.** Ask: is this proposed action able to meet that pro bono need?
- ☐ **3.** Ask: does my firm have pro bono best practices, support, resources, and risk management?
 - ☐ **a.** Client relationship management competencies for pro bono client communities
 - ☐ **b.** Substantive and trauma-informed or specialized training for attorneys to meet the needs for particular pro bono clients
- ☐ **4.** Learn: timelines for pro bono matters? Is your proposed project aligned with serving potential pro bono clients (including relevant timelines?)
- ☐ **5.** Learn: who are my firm's current public interest partners, and what are the best practices for working with public interest or pro bono referring partner organizations?
- ☐ **6.** Learn: what are the differences when working with pro bono clients?
- ☐ **7.** Evaluate: are communications appropriate to the pro bono client and context?
- ☐ **8.** Evaluate: is it appropriate to market/communicate about this pro bono work externally? Consider confidentiality and broader context.
- ☐ **9.** Evaluate: are there potential partnerships with corporate/fee-paying clients?
- ☐ **10.** Ask: are my goals realistic?

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Take Action

- ☐ **1. Small Steps (just start!)**
 - ☐ **a.** Connect with pro bono counsel/manager/partner for conversation about skills developed in typical matters (Litigation: take deposition? Manage administrative hearing? Transactional: assist nonprofits with incorporation and applications for tax exemption?)
 - ☐ **b.** Connect with pro bono/CSR teams for speaker ideas
 - ☐ **c.** Discover and share pro bono wins (highlight skills developed or connections made) in quarterly meetings, with practice group leaders, with firm leadership
 - ☐ **d.** Share CLE options with pro bono/CSR teams and ask for resources from other departments
 - ☐ **e.** Highlight pro bono opportunities for mentor pairs
 - ☐ **f.** Offer to structure and develop CLE training series related to pro bono work in partnership with pro bono contacts at my firm
 - ☐ **g.** Additional ideas? (my notes here)
 - ☐ **h.**
 - ☐ **i.**
- ☐ **2. Big Initiatives (long-term goals)**
 - ☐ **a.** Develop and cultivate relationships with other departments and actors in my firm to collaborate on future projects
 - ☐ **b.** Connect with other departments months in advance of proposed project or need
 - ☐ **c.** When developing new initiatives with other departments or actors, identify project management structure (is PD leading new initiative?)
 - ☐ **d.** Work toward integrating pro bono practice into existing structures (firm onboarding, orientations, conferences, retreats, summer programs, affinity groups)
 - ☐ **e.** Review firm written policies (PD, pro bono, wellness) to determine if they should be updated to reflect this integrated approach
 - ☐ **f.**
 - ☐ **g.**

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Select Resources on Pro Bono and Well-Being

Pro Bono and Well-Being

[What Does Pro Bono Work Mean to Attorneys?](#), September 20, 2022

- “Attorneys providing pro bono services learn new skills, make career connections, and boost their professional profiles. New attorneys can gain real-world legal experience and seasoned attorneys can re-energize their love of the law. All for the price of just 50 hours a year.”

[The Benefits of Volunteering for Pro Bono](#), September 16, 2022

- Development of professional skills
- Lead case responsibility
- Direct client contact
- Develop relationships
- Professional credit
- Self-fulfillment

[Can Participation in Pro Bono Service Increase Student Well-being? I've Seen It Happen](#), August 31, 2022

- “I can think of three recent conversations where students identified their involvement in pro bono service as being among the factors that ultimately aided them on a path towards wellness.”
- “According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), all human beings require regular experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness to thrive and maximize their positive motivation...Pro bono service opportunities regularly offer all three.”

[How Pro Bono Services is an Unexpected Wellness Tool](#), April 20, 2022

- Pro bono work can: Rejuvenate optimism
- Keep things fresh
- Encourage a sense of professional belonging: “Performing pro bono work—and being recognized for it—can aid a sense of community or belonging. That’s valuable in a profession where it’s all too easy to hunch over a computer all day and, maybe without even realizing it, wind up feeling isolated.”
- Form new connections
- Promote engagement and re-commitment

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Pro Bono and Professional Development/Well-Being

[Pro Bono Work in New Areas of Expertise](#), January 19, 2023 (UK)

- There are many advantages to pro bono work in new areas, including: new skills and expertise
- personal and professional development, and
- providing valuable pro bono assistance to a greater number of people who are unable to access legal advice

[The Benefits of Pro Bono Work](#), November 16, 2022

- “There are a lot of benefits to taking on pro bono work—gaining skills, refreshing your outlook on your career, benefiting the greater community—the positives are endless.”

[The Importance and Benefits of Incorporating Pro Bono Work into Your Practice](#), April 4, 2022

- From building and diversifying skills through on-the-ground experience to working with other like-minded professionals, pro bono work makes lawyers better for all their clients.
- By trying their hand at more diverse cases, pro bono attorneys cultivate a robust skill set that they would not otherwise have developed.
- Volunteers create lasting relationships with lawyers and the judiciary outside their current network.
- Doing pro bono work provides self-fulfillment. Providing legal services to the underserved members of our community, who might otherwise go without needed legal representation, is a deeply satisfying experience on both a professional and personal level.

[Pro Bono: For the Public Good and Your Well-Being](#), October 22, 2021

- “Here are some ways pro bono work helps with our well-being – this includes strong relationships, a sense of purpose, and building resilience.”

[Pro Bono Work: An Unheralded Tool for Professional Development](#), April 29, 2021

- “In short, my pro bono work has given me the chance to develop practical trial skills and a “personal brand” that will serve me well in private practice while making a real difference in my community.”

[Another Path for Public Service: Pro Bono in Big Law](#), December 21, 2019

- “The message is that pro bono work is valued and encouraged-as long as it is balanced appropriately with the need to ensure that corporate clients remain the top priority. This can lead to a heavy workload but can also offer unmatched professional development early in one’s career.”

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Community Service and Well-Being

[5 Ways Volunteering Can Counteract Imposter Syndrome](#)

Are you interested in volunteering or taking on a pro bono project, but held back by feelings of self-doubt or imposter syndrome? [Read this article](#) for tips on how volunteering can counteract your imposter syndrome (volunteering and pro bono work can help you build self-esteem, connect with your community, improve your well-being, improve your substantive skills, and grow your network).

[Volunteering and Its Surprising Benefits](#), February 27, 2023

- Volunteering connects you to others
- Volunteering is good for your mind and body
- Volunteering can advance your career
- Volunteering brings fun and fulfillment to your life

[Cleveland Clinic: Why Giving Is Good for Your Health](#), December 7, 2022

- Physical and mental health benefits associated with giving or serving can include: lower blood pressure
- A longer lifespan
- Less stress
- A “helper’s high”

[7 Ways Being Kind Is Good for Your Health and Well-Being](#), November 10, 2022

- Kindness can help with anxiety and depression, may improve heart health, diabetes management, and may help you live longer
- Doing good for others can go a long way in supporting your own mental health — and so can directing that kindness toward yourself

[Mayo Clinic: 3 Health Benefits of Volunteering](#), September 16, 2021

- Improves physical and mental health
- Provides a sense of purpose and teaches valuable skills
- Nurtures new and existing relationships

[Harvard School of Public Health: Volunteering is Good for Your Health](#), 2020

- “Older adults who volunteer for as little as two hours per week can substantially lower their risk of early death, become more physically active, and improve their sense of well-being compared with those who don’t volunteer.”