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Hire Humble People

By Christopher Earley

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Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. —C. S. Lewis

When it comes to growing my law firm, I am always looking for the next superstar team member. These are the special team members we should all aspire to hire for all positions in a law firm. Hiring, though, has become more challenging in recent years. Regardless of the hiring climate, I prioritize hiring people who are humble because humble people, working together, can create big things. Humble people, I believe, rocket the growth of a law firm. When you hire people who are generally humble, many things take care of themselves, which makes owning and managing a law firm that much easier. I prioritize humility above all else when hiring because humble people:

An advertisement for TransUnion's TLOxp service. On the left, the TransUnion logo is displayed above a yellow-bordered button that says "Learn more". To the right, a hand is shown typing on a laptop keyboard. The background features a glowing digital interface with a central cloud icon, a circular target graphic, and a vertical list of folder icons on the right side. Text in the center reads: "Personal Injury Attorneys: Complete weeks or even months of legwork in seconds" and "TLOxp - public and proprietary records".

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Personal Injury Attorneys:
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TLOxp - public and proprietary
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1. Know They Don't Know Everything

Humble people know that they have much to learn, and that keeps them hungry and grounded to continue growing. They always want to learn because they understand that the more they learn, the more they grow. They are generally forever-learners who always want to gain more knowledge, skills, and expertise.

2. Are More Likely to Prioritize Team over Self

Teamwork does make the dream work, and that applies to law firms, too. Humble team members will value team over self because they understand that this is a much better long-game approach than selfish, me-first thinking that ultimately leads to a toxic and destructive culture that will hold back, if not destroy, a law firm.

3. Are More Receptive to Being Coached

Humble people want to be challenged because they want to grow and get better. The best players in sports are the ones who want to learn and be challenged. They always want to level up. Michael Jordan is a classic example of someone who craved coaching because he wanted to be great and knew he had so much to improve to get to the level he wanted to reach—and ultimately did reach.

4. Make Better Leaders

If you want to develop leaders in your firm, humble people generally make better leaders than those who are not so humble. Humble leaders are more likely to get buy-in from other team members because they don't see a team as a top-down vertical structure but rather as a horizontal one where everyone is equal, regardless of position. This makes them more effective leaders, and that is how you can grow your law firm to whatever size you want. After all, who wants to work for someone who thinks he knows everything and has all the answers?

5. Understand the Value of Service to Others

The legal profession exists to help people solve their legal problems. Humble people generally want to help others because they find meaning and value through service. They have empathy, and to me, that is the ultimate virtue that all law firms should prioritize. If a law firm is empathetic to its clients, it is practically automatic that the money will come.

Finding Humble Job Candidates

So, how can you identify candidates who are humble? One way is to ask questions during an interview that will give you “tells.” Here are some interview questions I ask to determine whether someone is or is not humble: What would your friends say is your greatest weakness? What is the worst thing a prior boss would say about you? Who is a person in your life who is better than you at doing a task that matters to you?

If you like the candidate, call his or her references after the interview and ask the reference to rate the candidate's level of humility on a scale of one to ten. If you want to have the candidate back for a second interview, try (if possible) to have the candidate sit down with someone else from your team so you can get your colleague's take on the candidate and whether or not the person is humble.

There are many traits I look for when seeking out and recruiting A-level team members to work at my law firm. Humility is but one of these traits, but for me, it is the most important one. If you have other traits that you prioritize when hiring, I would love to hear them. Shoot me an email at cearley@earleylawgroup.com because I would love to hear from you.

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