

With Vaccinations Rolling Out, Law Firms Eyeing Office Return

After operating remotely for the past year, local law firms are contemplating when attorneys and staff will return to working in the office. PS&H managing partner, Howard Merten, was asked to give his thoughts on the subject for a recent *Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly* article titled, “With Vaccinations Rolling Out, Law Firms Eyeing Office Return”.

Firm leaders are being cautious in their approach to recall everyone back to the office, recognizing the need to follow appropriate protocols and be respectful of individual circumstances. However, most agree that working in the office together provides the benefit of in-person collaboration and relationship building, especially for younger lawyers.

“We see ourselves as a culture-driven firm, where our people are very collaborative, place a high emphasis on teamwork, and trust each other implicitly,” says Howard. “Younger lawyers model that behavior by seeing it in the office, so a big question is how to develop connectivity and trust with everyone working from home.”

In the article, Howard says that some Partridge Snow & Hahn employees have extenuating circumstances that keep them closer to home, while others have been “chomping at the bit” to get back to the office. He explains that the firm has been flexible on that front, but with a guiding principle that ensures client needs are always met “seamlessly and completely.”

An unexpectedly positive side effect of the collective experience over the past year, Howard points out, is that some partners now have a closer relationship with their clients due to their extra efforts to keep their connection strong.

Weighing factors such as increasing numbers of vaccinations, federal and state government guidance, and compliance with safety protocols is a common driver in the thought process as decisions are made on the timing of everyone’s return.

Howard shares that the current scenario at Partridge Snow & Hahn is that attorneys and staff are in the office at least a couple of times a week. Falling COVID cases in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, progress administering vaccines, and eased restrictions in both states allowed more staff and attorneys to return to the office safely. .

Howard and other firm leaders in Rhode Island seem to agree that some form of remote working will exist beyond COVID. Howard noted that external factors may also influence how remote working plays out in the future: “While some partners want everyone back, others see meaningful advantages with a work-from-home option. Market forces, such as recruiting and retention factors, may be the guiding factor there.”

The full article as published in *Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly*, can be [viewed here](#). (Subscription required)

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