

## At Kirkland, ‘Concierge’ Service Aims to Ease Personal Distractions for Lawyers

By Roy Strom  
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Need help moving houses? Running out of time to plan your family vacation, or pick up gifts for the holidays? Or, heaven forbid, what about replacing a lost wedding ring?

At Kirkland & Ellis, there’s now a concierge for that.

The blue chip Am Law 100 firm this month rolled out a firmwide concierge service, dubbed “Kirkland Concierge,” giving lawyers and senior staff access to a group of on-call assistants who can help with (nearly) every personal task or errand a busy lawyer could think of. The firm’s alumni—any lawyer who worked at the firm more than three months—will also have access to a pared-down version of the concierge service starting next year.

Could the service free up more time for work as much as it creates more free time? Sure, but the firm says the goal is to make Kirkland & Ellis a more appealing workplace by letting its people focus on things they want to do, rather than on pesky personal tasks.

“It’s not to provide a service so people can work all the time,” said Chiara Wrocinski, the firm’s senior director of legal recruiting and development. “It’s to provide a service that will supplement and enhance the lives of our attorneys and give them an opportunity to spend their very precious downtime on what they want to do.”



Image credit: Steve Cukrov

Wrocinski said the program was borne, in part, from her own frustration with juggling the demands of last year’s holiday season with her own work. Planning parties, buying gifts and giving presentations for work led to a moment of reflection after her husband suggested she quit her job. She didn’t want to quit; she just didn’t have time for the holiday grind.

“It was in that moment where I had this realization that I’m overwhelmed, but it’s not my work that’s overwhelming me, it’s this personal stuff that is distracting me,” Wrocinski said. “And that is likely how our attorneys are feeling at times, so why not solve for that?”

The firm's research showed that only 3 percent of companies offer concierge services, but 30 percent of employers that make "best place to work" lists offer some version of the perk.

Such services range from call centers to handle reservations or online purchases to professional staff that cater exclusively to C-suite executives. The firm opted for a mix of both, provided in part by a concierge firm called Circles. Kirkland lawyers now have access to a call (and e-mail) center as well as having full-time concierge staff on-site at its offices. The service is free except for off-hour requests that require a concierge staff member. Personal purchases made through the service also are paid for by the lawyers and staff, not the firm.

The firm has also trained the concierge staff about what different lawyers' jobs entail, so they understand the demands of a bankruptcy or a trial. The concierge service also received training on how to respond to lawyers: Brevity is key. They are asked to provide specific answers to questions with bullet points.

So far, the firm says about 20 percent of its eligible employees have used the service in some way. The use is split fairly evenly between men and women, Wrocinski said, but associates have made more requests than partners. Associates are typically looking for help with household or personal errands

while partners are more likely to book personal travel or entertainment.

One early service the concierge provided was to help a lawyer plan to move out of her house. The lawyer, whom the firm declined to name, had a closing on the sale of her house scheduled in two weeks when she was asked to be in Europe for a work matter. That's when the concierge service took over.

"The planning and organization kept everything on track and I appreciate your responsiveness during this very stressful period," the lawyer wrote to the concierge firm, according to Wrocinski. "Thank you for everything. It was a pleasure working with you."

Wrocinski said the firm had not identified other large law firms that provided a similar level of service. She said the firm is hoping the service is viewed as an advantage in its efforts to recruit young lawyers.

"Our goal is to create an environment where they're going to the best place to work," Wrocinski said. "This isn't a Band-Aid to a grueling bleed. This is because we want you to come here. We want you to have the best opportunities to learn; to be mentored; and to spend time with clients. And then we want you to go home and feel energized and want to come back here tomorrow."