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Bucking the Trend, These Two Firms Added Space During the Pandemic

Quote by David Aughtry about Bucking the Trend, These Two Firms Added Space During the Pandemic

The Daily Report

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In an article published in the Daily Report on November 17, 2020, Atlanta-based shareholder David Aughtry discusses our office growth and expansion in Atlanta.

Aughtry explained that this expansion was in the works before the COVID-19 pandemic, and shared how the firm shifted the design for the likelihood of remote work as a permanent feature. While industrywide law firms are downsizing, Chamberlain Hrdlicka needed more space for the 11 additional lawyers hired in Atlanta so far this year.

The article mentions that, Chamberlain Hrdlicka added 4,500 square feet on an additional floor for its 51-lawyer downtown Atlanta office at 191 Peachtree St. N.E. In a departure, the nine new lawyer offices are uniformly sized (16 by 11 feet). At 176 square feet, they are halfway between the 225-square-foot partner offices and 150-square-foot associate offices.

Aughtry addresses in the article that in another break with tradition, only six are on the exterior window wall. The interior offices are intended for lawyers who do not come in as often. He also shared that he is not in favor of the hoteling concept, where lawyers rotate in and out of shared offices, the way large accounting firms and law firms in New York are doing.

You need to treat your people with respect if you're trying to instill excellence. That means they need their own office, he said. But, he added, it doesn't need to be the big partner office for when you're working here six days a week.

To accommodate staff and maintain social distancing, Chamberlain's 51 lawyers and 40 staff in Atlanta are split into two teams, which alternate coming in Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays, with deep cleaning on Fridays. But that is not mandatory, Aughtry shared, because the firm wants to honor people's different risk tolerances.

You cannot run a law firm with your people working exclusively from home. You need the interaction and the exchange of ideas, Aughtry said. I worry about the professional environment and the intensity of interaction. You can't make strong lawyers out of people working from home in gym shorts.