

Remote, but Not Removed

Picture this: A Zoom room sits open, quiet except for one lawyer working away. Ping—someone enters. It might be a quick question or a deeper discussion. The next day, same time, it happens again, except more people join, and what began as a simple question becomes a mini roundtable of ideas. This is the advantage of virtual “open door” hours: creating space for spontaneous interaction in a remote work world where serendipitous encounters are harder to come by.

Remote work offers many benefits. But many people are realizing that connection is essential for collaboration, learning, and well-being. In an office, you can casually stop by someone’s desk to ask a quick question without the formality of scheduling a call. You might overhear a conversation that sparks curiosity and learning, or bump into a colleague at the water cooler when you need a morale boost. Online, those organic moments are few and far between, unless we intentionally create them.

Strategies for firms and teams to help intentionally create connections

Virtual open-door hours

Keep a recurring video link open for drop-ins. It mimics the casual “got a minute?” dynamic without the formality of scheduling a call. Some days no one will show up, that’s okay. Use the time to work.

Schedule individual (one-on-one) meetings

Dedicated time gives people permission to pause, share what they are working on, and ask questions they might otherwise hold back. It is a chance to spot challenges early, celebrate wins, and make sure no one feels invisible in a remote setting. When done well, check-ins build trust and remind everyone they are part of a team.

Chat touchpoints

Send a quick message to a colleague to see how they are doing. Less formal than a call but still personal, and an easy bridge to a phone or video call if needed.

Structured team meetings

Share an agenda in advance so people come prepared. Rotate speakers, set time limits, and use a “pass the baton” approach to keep everyone engaged and ensure each person has a voice.

Alternate the format, sometimes with a smaller group and sometimes larger. Break large groups into smaller discussions for deeper conversation, then reconvene to share insights. Breakout rooms can be great for brainstorming or mentoring moments.

Schedule social time

Host a dedicated virtual drop-in social hour to keep your team connected. From time to time, mix it up with creative twists! Try a “drop-in café” where everyone brings their favorite snack and shares a fun fact. Try themed trivia time (pop culture, history, or “guess the song”), holiday dress-up hours with costumes and virtual backgrounds, online escape rooms, or a “show and tell” session for hobbies and pets. Rotate activities so there’s something for everyone.

Polls and icebreakers

A weekly poll like “which superpower would you choose: mind reading, flying, invisibility, or strength?” can be fun and a low-pressure way for people to engage, share something quirky, and even spark laughter. They help colleagues learn a little more about each other without oversharing, which makes team interactions feel more human and collaborative. Keep it light, inclusive, and varied so everyone feels comfortable joining in.

Dedicated social channels

Create a chat space for non-work chatter like vacations, hobbies, Hollywood gossip, or pet photos. Personal glimpses strengthen bonds.

Short meet-and-greets or catch-up coffee chats

On a volunteer basis, pair people randomly each month, especially those who do not usually interact. It is a simple, fun way for colleagues to meet new faces or reconnect with someone they do not generally get to chat with. These casual conversations can generate interest and understanding about what others are working on, opening doors for collaboration and shared learning.

Wellness initiatives

Think seasonal step challenges, mindfulness breaks, or “walk-and-learn” webinars. Wellness is not just a perk, it is a productivity booster. Lead by example and make it part of the culture.

Promote wellness and flexibility

Notice someone burning the midnight oil? Check in and ask what support they need. If possible, offer flexibility because when people feel their life circumstances are respected, they are more likely to give that respect back in commitment and quality.

Tips for solo lawyers

Peer circles

Form a WhatsApp or email group of 5–8 lawyers for casual conversation and quick advice. Keeping the group small helps avoid overwhelming chatter and makes it easier to build meaningful connections.

Set a cadence for connection

Pre-schedule coffee chats whether video or in-person. Scheduling well in advance or setting a reoccurring time makes it easier for people to commit.

Pick up the phone

Sometimes the simplest option is the best. A quick call can break up the monotony, ease isolation, and/or spark important discussions.

Structured engagement through tech tools and wellness initiatives fosters collaboration, knowledge sharing, and mutual support. For lawyers, that means reducing claims risk, lowering stress, and strengthening client services. Intentional engagement not only improves teamwork and morale, but it also builds a healthier, more resilient profession. ■

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