



executive**directions**

JOHN J. MICHALIK  
ALA Executive Director

# Making Your Law Firm an Extraordinary Place to Work

I want to “bend your ear” a bit about something you can positively contribute to your firm’s success; something that can increase your personal value to your firm; and, perhaps above all, something that will better the lives of everyone who works in your firm. And I’m going to tell you a little about a new, specific, and unparalleled resource to help you achieve those aspirations and objectives.

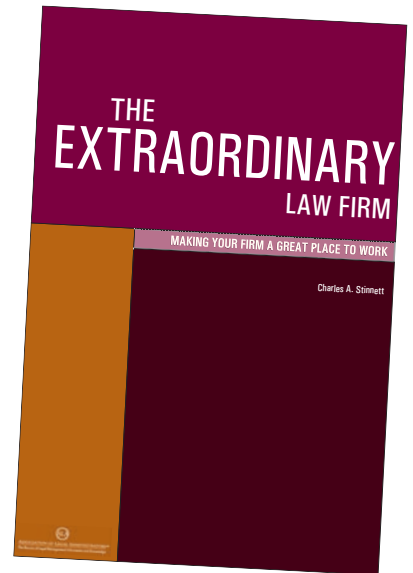
By definition, when something is “extraordinary” it goes beyond what is usual, regular, or customary. It is noticeably and positively different from what you generally find. It is exceptional or special. In the context of that definition, an extraordinary place to work is something more than just a destination on weekday mornings.

An extraordinary place to work – in fact, an extraordinary law firm – is much more than bricks and mortar and glass, modern equipment, and coffee and rolls in the morning. It is good space design and the creation of a conducive and welcoming atmosphere; it is the presence of a positive “culture” that people believe in and foster in others; it is the development of people and their skills not only for the good of the business but for the good of the people themselves; it is a mix of

interpersonal relations, and respect for and trust in others; it is a place characterized by communication and sharing. It is a place that those who work there are comfortable in and are eager and proud to be a part of, even though they may not be able to pinpoint why they know and feel that way. There is a “business case” and an individual “quality of life” case for a business being more than just a *place* to work. It should be what we all feel is *the place* to work and where we *want* to work.

How do we go about creating that sort of workplace? What things are there about law firms that make them different from other businesses, and how do you address those differences in creating an extraordinary place to work? What approaches and tools are used by law firms that have been recognized as “Great” or “Best” places to work, and how can you apply those in your firm, regardless of size or the financial resources that may be available? While to this point there has been no law firm-specific resource to answer these and many related questions, that resource is now at hand and available. It is and will be *The* source of information and guidance in this important area.

*The Extraordinary Law Firm: Making Your Firm a Great Place to*



*Work* is the result of a research effort undertaken in late 2005 by the Foundation of the Association of Legal Administrators (FALA) to explore the attitudes, culture, leadership, programs, and activities that can be developed and contribute to making a law firm – or other legal organization – an extraordinary place to work. FALA’s Trustees approached and commissioned one of the profession’s most highly regarded and thoughtful practitioners, former ALA President Charles Stinnett, to conduct that research and write a definitive, practical, experience-based reference.

Over a two-year period, Chuck drew upon the resources of those, including such experts as David Maister and the Great Place to Work® Institute, who have studied the development of great workplaces in many business contexts; he visited law firms and interviewed and surveyed the key people who had helped many of those firms make “Best Places to Work” lists; he assembled extensive case studies of those firms, including specific “take-aways” and

tips about how to adapt best practices to firms of different sizes; he developed key guidelines and checklists for how a firm can choose to become a great place to work, and how to get started on and implement that mission; and he brought to bear his own considerable experience, along with the perspective he gained in two years of focused effort, in addressing the tough questions of assessing your firm's culture, charting a course of action, developing the courage to act, and winning over the stakeholders whose firm-wide support you need. And, just as importantly, Chuck delved into the "dark side" to look into some causes of business and firm failures: when bad things happen to good firms.

Chuck exceeded all our expectations and has created a reference, and a roadmap, that can truly help

equip firm managers with the desire and the tools to make their offices extraordinary places to work for everyone, lawyers and professional staff, who works there. *The Extraordinary Law Firm: Making Your Firm a Great Place to Work* is an absolutely unique, comprehensive (pre-publication projected 300+ pages), and practical book and reference that every ALA member should read cover-to-cover. You'll find out things you may not know about your profession and law firms, and I think you'll also acquire the enthusiasm and the energy to help lead your firm further down the road to being a truly extraordinary place to work.

*The Extraordinary Law Firm: Making Your Firm a Great Place to Work* will be available in late April 2007, including at the ALA Bookstore at our Annual Conference in Las Vegas. ♦

***The Extraordinary Law Firm: Making Your Firm a Great Place to Work* is an absolutely unique, comprehensive, and practical book and reference that every ALA member should read cover-to-cover.**

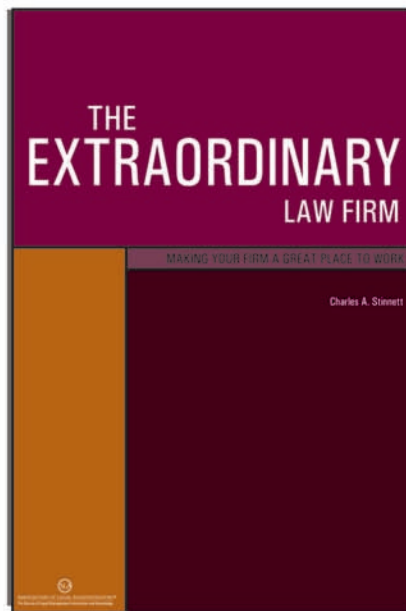
## The Extraordinary Law Firm: Making Your Firm a Great Place to Work



Great law firms do not just happen. They are the product of exceptional leadership and sweat equity. This book aims to equip firm managers with the knowledge and desire to transform their offices into the remarkable workplaces that deliver not only superior client service, but also the utmost satisfaction for each and every person who is part of that effort. The author draws from 12 case studies to create specific checklists for firms of any size to use to create an extraordinary law firm.

This book will be available at **ALA'S 36th ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE AND EXPOSITION** in Las Vegas, Nevada, and will be coming soon to the ALA Bookstore online at [www.alanet.org/bookstore](http://www.alanet.org/bookstore). Check the Web site for updates.

**MEMBER PRICE: \$75.00**



Author: Charles E. Stinnett. 2007.