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## Positioning Your New Professional

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One of the primary reasons for hiring new planners is to free up time for firm owners to perform the higher level revenue producing tasks their more experienced skill set is suited for, such as working with higher net worth clients and/or securing additional clients.

If your goal for your new planner is to truly help free you up for your best or new clients, it is imperative you get them working with your existing clients as soon as possible. In previous articles I've written (<http://www.newplannerrecruiting.com/articles/calebs-blog.html>), I've discussed ways to facilitate your new planner's skill development to close the gap and prepare for guiding clients at a high level, but putting that training to practice with regular client interaction is a key component as well. If you eventually want your new planner to be able to handle client relationships on their own, here are some ideas on how to introduce, integrate, and position them correctly with clients now:

- Send welcome letter - Introducing your new hire to your clients, colleagues and strategic alliances is one of the first things you should do after you hire a new planner. This can be part of one of your regular client touches, but preferably the new hire announcement would be a stand-alone communication to promote its importance. Make sure you highlight your new planner's credentials, education and experience (if applicable), why you hired them, and what they will be doing to help the clients. Also include the new planner's business card so clients will have another reminder that it is official. We now provide a version of this letter as part of the deliverable package we provide to clients who engage us for recruiting services. (If you would like a copy, email me at [cbrown@newplannerrecruiting.com](mailto:cbrown@newplannerrecruiting.com)). Furthermore, if you send a newsletter to clients you should include the new hire announcement there as well. You want the recipients to be thinking to themselves, "Wow, this is a big deal!" Because it is... any time you make a new hire for your business it is monumental! If you don't feel this way about your hires, you are probably looking at your employees in the wrong light.
- Add to website and phone tree – Post your new planner's picture and bio on your website to reinforce to clients and prospects that they are an integral part of the team. Make sure you do this before you send out the introduction letter above. You might consider placing your new planner's picture above yours on the website and setting up their extension and mailbox as the first option for incoming callers to select. If you have an automated system, this means they will likely get all of the automated and/or solicitation calls and you won't have to deal with them. It also shows the clients and your colleagues how highly you regard your new hire. More simplistically though people (aka clients) are impatient and oftentimes just select the first person they can get so they don't have to wait. That is one less phone call you don't have to deal with that most likely doesn't need your level of expertise anyway.



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- Visible office – You don't necessarily want the client viewing the new planner as a back office employee nor a front office admin type even though they may very well be performing some or both of those job functions. If your office space allows, try having your new planner sit towards the front though so clients and prospects can see them in an actual office space. Some of this may seem silly, but clients tend to place emphasis on these items. I had a corner office at one point during my career and the clients noticed it and saw me differently.
- Return voicemails and/or correspondence - Have your new planner respond wherever they can, when appropriate, to refine their communication skills and train the clients that they don't have to contact you for everything! At first you will have to work with your new planner, but as they build confidence they will be able to handle more advanced questions and requests. The clients will slowly be trained to go to the new planner first for most things and they should feel comfortable that the new planner will escalate to you when necessary.
- Participate in client meetings –In the beginning, it is going to be primarily up to you to position (build up) your new planner in the clients' eyes. Then eventually the client will realize they can trust your new planner if you trusted them enough to hire them. Consider having them in all meetings, but a great place to start is in the initial meeting: you focus on the client, and let your new planner take the notes. The next best thing is to bring your new planner in during the data gathering/discovery meeting so they can help analyze, organize and ask questions about the client's situation and be in a better position to create a more accurate financial plan. This is a great way to gradually transition them into an advice-giving role. Data gathering sessions provide a more comfortable forum for a new planner to hone their listening and questioning skills to further prepare for meetings when the clients are asking all of the questions. Since the new planner will be the one digging into the client data from the ground up and creating the financial plan, they will probably know the details of the client situation better than you. This gives them opportunities in other meetings to shine by answering questions the client may ask, that you can't answer, because you are focused on addressing the high level strategy topics and not as much on the details.
- Client events – In addition to the obvious attendance at client events you host, have them accompany you to events that colleagues, strategic alliances, and clients host. The more your network sees your new hire at your side, the quicker they will begin to recognize them as part of the team. If you aren't attending client events such as open houses for new businesses/branches they have started, etc., I encourage you to as those are great networking and business development opportunities.

Sometimes I find firm owners have been hesitant to do these types of things because they are nervous about introducing a new hire to their clients and then having the new hire leave a few months later. There are always risks to any decision you make, but if these fears are hindering you from positioning your new hire correctly you need to revisit your hiring and on-boarding process. Keep in mind, facilitating these activities will further your new planner's development and help you reach your goals. Furthermore, the benefits you can derive from this are more than you might be able to imagine. When firm owners take these steps, new planners tend to develop a tremendous amount of loyalty, helping to solidify in their minds that the choice they made to join your firm was indeed the correct one thus becoming less likely to leave prematurely.

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Caleb Brown is the 2011 President Elect of Nexgen, and has been featured in Investment News, Financial Planning, Financial Advisor and Solutions (excerpt to the Journal of Financial Planning) regarding his efforts to create a career path for up and coming planners. He is a regular contributor to industry publications writing articles about various career development topics and serves as a discussion host for several online industry discussion boards.