

'Counter Offer' changing the game for 2L summer students

August 22, 2017 | Written By Mallory Hendry



For many law firms the assumption is, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. This often applies to the approach in recruiting of new talent as well.

"We just don't operate that way," says Peter Aprile, founder of and principal at Counter Tax Lawyers.

"Obviously big law has a much bigger marketing budget and go about things in a very traditional way. I think it would be a fool's errand to try to match that marketing budget dollar for dollar, but it's a fool's errand to try and take the same tactic as well. How do you show people that you're different?"

Even if I was willing to match dollar for dollar, how effective could that possibly be if everybody is employing the same tactics and the same budget?"

So the firm came up with the Counter Offer. The law student who secures Counter's 2L summer position is guaranteed an articling position — and the firm takes it one step further. If you're offered a one-year associate position after completing your articles, you get \$10,000 if you choose not to take the job.

As the [blog post](#) announcing the offer for next summer states, "Yes, you heard that right: we will pay you \$10,000 to walk away."

"If the Counter Offer increases the number of top-level candidates — we are comfortable risking \$10,000," Aprile says.

The firm has never attempted to recruit students before — it's a new stage of its growth, says Aprile. In every industry, finding the best talent is competitive — law is no different, he notes.

"It gives 2L candidates an opportunity to get to know us. It shows our personalities, our culture and our mindset. We hope that it helps the people who are like us to self-identify as Counter people and start to run toward us in slow motion."

The scenario is a familiar one, according to Aprile: a law student lands a summer position, and spends a large amount of energy worrying about where all the work they're putting in will get them. Will they be offered an articling position? Will that lead to a full-time offer? Should they be keeping their options open?

Aprile doesn't think that's the best environment for a budding lawyer to thrive in. The firm wants to take some of that stress off so its 2L summer student can focus on doing their best work and learn "how to find brilliant solutions to tax litigation problems."

"We wanted to provide a comfortable environment in which people can dedicate their time and energy into things that matter," Aprile says.

He notes the firm has "a pretty extensive" hiring process and because of that rigor he is as confident as possible in who the firm decides to hire, and therefore comfortable guaranteeing articling as well as banking on the student opting to stay if given the option.

As for the response, Aprile says it has been "extremely positive." There have been a few law firms and legal tech companies in the United States and in Canada who have commented on the offer.

"It's not about the money — what people are complimenting us on is it shows our mindset and says something about our firm that goes way beyond the strict dollars and cents of it," Aprile says.

He notes he expects the idea, terms and execution to evolve, adding that the firm will review the results of the Counter Offer and perhaps refine the offer going forward.

"Anytime you try to build something new — something better — the first attempt is rarely perfect. If we learn the Counter Offer was a terrible idea, we'll go back to the whiteboard."