

FIREWALKING IN FIVE STEPS

How are legal operations similar to firewalking? If you've ever felt the heat of a serious organizational problem, you've experienced the mental equivalent of standing barefoot at the edge of a 15-foot bed of blazing hot coals. You're ready to fix the problem, but the last thing you want to do is get burned. Firewalking has much to teach us about how to approach an organizational obstacle.

Here are some tips from our friends at **Fire Power Seminars**, a company that leads individuals and organizations out of their comfort zones and into their growth zones through firewalking and other boundary-pushing activities like breaking boards, blocks and arrows and even bending steel rebar.

Step 1: Pay attention. Whether you're facing burning coals or an organizational issue, you need to know where you are and what is going on around you. Carefully examine existing processes and how they may be limiting your success.

Step 2: Expect the best. The chances of getting burned on a firewalk are much lower than you think. Similarly, when embarking on a challenge, a positive attitude can make a large problem much more manageable. When making a plan, focus on the best possible outcome.

Step 3: Be prepared for the worst. While you should expect the best, do not ignore the chance a worst-case scenario may occur. If you absolutely cannot handle the idea of your worst-case scenario, you may need to reconsider whether you or your organization are ready to make a change.

Step 4: Make a plan of action. Look at your challenge and determine exactly how you want to tackle it. Are you going to walk slowly and steadily? Take a brisk pace and risk a few small burns? No matter how you approach the firewalk, keep your end goal in mind and ensure your plan will get you from the first step to the last.

Step 5: Follow your plan. The firewalk has started and you've made the first step, which is often the most difficult. If you abandon your plan now or stop paying attention, you're at risk of being burned. Stay focused on your end goal and follow through with your plan. You will arrive at the end of the firewalk before you know it.

Once you've completed your first firewalk — whether a nighttime stroll over blazing coals or a major legal operations project years in the making — the next firewalk will be much easier. You will have faced your organizational problem, developed a strategy to solve it, and emerged successful.

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR OUTSIDE COUNSEL

One of the most powerful components of a firewalk is that no one does it alone. It takes a team to prep the wood, light the fire, tend the coals and make the walk. Impactful legal operations projects involving outside counsel are no different. Here are five questions to ask your outside counsel before embarking on your next legal operations firewalk.

1. When can you meet?

Your law firm should be nimble when responding to a call for help or challenging you to make a change. Although they may not have the answers right away, outside counsel need to be ready to listen. Hence, question 2:

2. Why are you talking?

Outside counsel should listen carefully to the problems you are facing. They shouldn't only offer a different practice group or a new service offering; true law firm partners will craft a client-first solution that responds to your needs.

3. What's in it for you?

It's not enough to offer the same service at a lower price — that approach cuts into a firm's profit margins, and often it's not the only thing that corporate counsel are looking for. You want a solution that makes good business sense for you and your outside counsel, one that can be sustained and enhanced over time.

4. Will you grow with me?

Any solution should be scalable, adaptable, and long-term. A quick-fix will only lead to other issues later on.

5. What's next?

A partnership forged by fire should be continually tested and expanded. Once you've walked across the flames together, schedule another meeting and see what you could tackle next.