

This Firm Tackles The Rural Attorney Shortage With Innovation

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Sprunger PEO is leveling the playing field between rural and urban practices

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BERNE, Ind., April 04, 2023 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- For years, economists and lawmakers have tried to solve the growing attorney shortage in rural America, without success. While big cities boast up to twenty-three attorneys per thousand residents, almost half of U.S. counties have less than one lawyer per thousand residents.

A vital reason these legal deserts exist? Lawyers often find it difficult to build a profitable firm based in these areas – not because the clients aren't there, but because so much of the lawyers' time is consumed by administrative

tasks like processing payroll.

Luckily, an enterprising firm is closing the gap with a new idea. recognized that with such a simple problem, the solution is just as simple: work together and consolidate the firms' administration.

In rural Indiana, Sprunger PEO is leveling the playing field between rural and urban practices - and it's working. Attorneys who consolidate their administration through Sprunger PEO increased their daily billable hours from 2.4 (the statewide average in Indiana) to more than 5. By doubling the capacity of each lawyer to serve their communities, the shortage is immediately cut in half. Further, the disincentive to practice in a small town (inability to earn enough) is gone, clearing the way for a future supply of attorneys to flow into the small towns.

Attorneys working with Sprunger PEO, a professional employer organization designed specifically for law firms, can outsource a comprehensive range of services like payroll processing, IT support, mail handling, employee benefits, and more. They handle the behind-the-scenes non-legal work, which typically takes up far too much of a small-town lawyer's time and makes it harder to build a client base and expand a firm.

It's the brainchild of attorney and Sprunger PEO managing partner Cory Sprunger, a highly qualified lawyer who once worked in the big cities himself until he felt a calling to the small town. His lifelong focus has been on improving rural quality of life.

"America needs both its big cities and small towns," he says. "Right now, rural areas don't have the access to the lawyers they deserve because attorneys have to focus too much on administrative duties instead of practicing law. What we're offering is a way for them to delegate those tasks so they can expand their firms and help their communities."

The need to increase access to lawyers in small-towns and rural areas is evident, as recently [highlighted by a Pew study](#) that found 1,272 out of 3,141 U.S. counties, or about forty percent, are deemed “legal deserts” – meaning they have fewer than a single lawyer available for every one thousand people. 54 counties in America have zero lawyers; 182 have only one or two. In rural states like [Indiana](#), [Arizona](#), [Texas](#), and [Idaho](#), there are huge areas with less than one attorney per thousand people, all while cities like New York and San Francisco contain fourteen and twenty-three per thousand, respectively. That’s a major setback for these small communities, who may find it impossible to secure legal support for building their own businesses, preparing wills, buying or selling real estate, criminal defense, and more.

“Everyone deserves access to an attorney, and we make small-town living more viable for lawyers. The clients are there; a professional can have a waiting list of clients on day one in a rural area,” says Sprunger. “Demand is so high in small towns that you don’t have to give up big city income, but you do need to solve the problem of administration.”

“IT, processing invoices, bookkeeping, banking – all of these have nothing to do with excelling as a small-town lawyer,” Sprunger notes. “But highly-qualified attorneys can’t make a good income because they have to reduce their billable hours to do all of this work themselves.”

Innovative private solutions, like the one Sprunger PEO provides, may be the perfect solution. By connecting individual small-town law firms into a network of administrative professionals, they free lawyers to devote all their time to helping clients, building their firms, and providing the access to the justice that small-town America deserves.

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