

Efficiency, Culture and Cholera?

By [Carla Landry](#) on September 24, 2013

My colleague, Jessa Baker, and I have discussed promoting a culture of efficiency in our blogs over the last few months and suggested a link to change exists in your talent strategy. Recently, I was reading a blog written by [Jack Bostelman](#) which brought me back to Jessa's most recent [blog](#) about developing talent. Jack writes in his blog about an AmLaw100 firm chairman who ponders culture and efficiency. He suggests that "the law firm equivalent of spreading the cure for cholera is getting lawyers to accept change and new procedures within the organization." Of course, out of context, this sounds absurd, but Jack goes on to write that "getting the new norm to be 'we fill out our data forms after every matter' requires firm leaders to proselytize their practice group heads, requires those heads to lobby the partners and senior associates in their groups, and requires those lawyers to set the expectation with the junior lawyers that those forms must be completed." As Jack appropriately notes, "that's a lot of talking."

Now, as Jack describes, and I have written about in prior blogs, lawyers have been tested and shown to score low on sociability, one among six traits where lawyers score outside the norm on 18 personality traits examined in the Caliper test. This translates into a challenge for lawyers to have what might be perceived as tough conversations – sociability is described as a desire to interact with people. Jessa suggests in her most recent blog that there are four steps to implementing a culture of efficiency via talent development. One of those steps, ensuring that efficiency goals are effectively communicated at every level of the organization, is precisely what Jack is suggesting is such a big hurdle for lawyers. But there's more detail behind that sociability score that could provide a link to successfully shifting to a culture of efficiency.

According to Dr. Larry Richard, who has examined thousands of lawyers with the Caliper test, "low sociability scores have broad implications for many aspect of law firm management – mentoring, teamwork, ..., and rainmaking...rainmakers scored nearly three and a half times higher on Sociability than service partners!" Now, in my experience, the majority of law firm leaders – including practice leaders, department heads, client team leaders, and industry team leaders – are also the biggest rainmakers in the firm. Further, if lawyers typically score low in sociability, this indicates they are "less inclined to enjoy interacting with others and may prefer to spend more time dealing with information, the intellect, or interactions that emphasize the mind rather than the heart." In my opinion, this is a perfect team combination to accomplish a shift toward greater efficiencies. If rainmakers will talk to their colleagues about the shift and service partners spend their energy focused on identifying and measuring where the best opportunities for efficiencies exist, implementation is what remains. So why don't those leaders get out there and start talking to their partners about change and efficiency?