

**LAW FIRM  
LEADERSHIP****Creating a  
Collaborative  
Work  
Environment**

By Silvia Coulter

So much has been written about leadership. Hundreds of books, thousands of articles.

Leadership means so much more than setting a strategy and dealing with the shareholders, although those are important and critical elements of leadership. Leadership means creating safe and collaborative environments for people who work at the firm. And, this means making or facilitating a leadership team to make tough decisions. Everyone counts is the rule.

Aligning behaviors with expectation is critical and setting the stage for a truly collaborative work environment means an inclusive work environment across all areas of work — lawyers, staff, business professionals. And, I'm not talking about just the lawyers; it's the entire firm. Everyone who works at the firm is responsible for treating others with respect and for being honest.

Why is this so important now? Pressure and stress are people killers. Adding stress by having people who are not collaborative and don't treat others well, or those who do not work well across offices or practice

*continued on page 7***You're Fired!***Dealing With a Job Loss*

By Brenda L. Thompson

**O**n a recent Friday morning, Paul received an email from his firm's Executive Director asking him to meet with her in a conference room at 4PM. Paul, who worked for the firm the past six years, was a senior practice group manager in the Marketing Department. He asked if there was an agenda for the meeting or anything he needed to prepare. He was told no, just stop by at 4PM.

When Paul arrived for the meeting, the Executive Director started the meeting by asking him about his family and if he had a nice time on his recent vacation. This was unusual in itself, since the Executive Director never asked Paul about his personal life. Then she got to the point. Paul was being terminated. *"It just isn't a good fit; we are moving in a different direction."* Paul was caught off guard and devastated. He had recently purchased a new home for his family and was their sole financial support. What was he going to do?

The chances are that many of us will either be terminated or laid off from at some point in our careers. It happens. How you deal with the loss of a job and get back on your feet as quickly as possible is what's important.

**FIRST STEPS**

**Try not to panic.** It is natural to feel a range of emotions around the termination, including those similar to Elisabeth Kubler Ross's five stages of grief during a loss (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance). You may be angry one moment and sad the next. It's a good idea to allow yourself time to decompress and process your new situation.

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## You're Fired!

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**Carefully review your severance package.** Make sure you know what you are entitled to receive. Is there a possibility of renegotiating the terms? Will you receive compensation for unused PTO, medical benefit continuation, etc.? Speak with your family and take into consideration that your spouse and children (should you have them) will have valid concerns of their own during this time. You lose more than your salary when you lose your job — you lose your “status” and daily routine. You may also lose your sense of identity and self-confidence.

### LOSS OF INCOME

Paul was terrified about the loss of income. He was living paycheck-to-paycheck since he purchased his new home. He also didn't know if a new job would pay as well and have similar benefits to the one he just lost.

One of the first things to do after losing your job is to apply for unemployment compensation. Even if you are not sure you will receive the benefit, depending on the reason for termination, you should apply immediately. Most firms will not deny unemployment benefits, unless terminated for cause, and this additional income will be helpful during your job search. Some states allow you to apply online, which is more convenient than physically going to the unemployment office.

Take an inventory of your expenses. Separate the needs from the wants and start to cut back. Do you really need all the extra cable channels? Can you reduce your grocery bill? You may be amazed at how much you can cut out of your monthly budget.

In many cases, your medical and dental benefits will extend through

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the end of the month. Take advantage of this time and schedule necessary appointments. If possible, try not to withdraw funds from your 401(k). In addition to being taxed on the gains, you may be assessed a 10% penalty.

### LOSS OF IDENTITY

It's natural, but not necessarily healthy, to tie your identity to your job. One of the first things we typically ask when meeting someone new is “*What do you do?*” or “*Where do you work?*” When you lose your job, identity can have a major impact on your mental health, regardless of your financial situation.

Keep in mind that we are all so much more than the work we do. We are family, friends, neighbors and volunteers. You define whom you are — not your job, your former supervisor or the firm's decision to let you go. Volunteering to help others during this time is a great way to remind yourself how fortunate you are and how much you contribute. Remind yourself that you are highly qualified — just temporarily without work.

### LOSS OF CONFIDENCE

Paul spent several weeks obsessing about his situation. *Why me? What did I do wrong? What could I have done differently? Who will hire me now?* He was angry and depressed. He started to question his competence, which is completely normal.

When you lose a job, your confidence can take a big hit. It's important to regain it back as quickly as possible. During unemployment, reach out to a good friend, career coach or mental health professional. Recall all the achievements you have made during your career or even during your lifetime. Write these things down so you can refer to the list when you need a boost.

### REGROUP AND REBOUND

Don't wait before starting your next job search. Taking some time to wallow is common, but the longer you wait, you put yourself at risk of feeling like a “victim” or becoming depressed.

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## Leveraging CI for Successful Business Development

*Sometimes You Don't Know What You Don't Know*

By Jim Jarrell

Over the last decade, competitive intelligence has evolved from simply being the data we collect and analyze. Today, considering competitive intelligence, I think more broadly about the data and information that helps to isolate and leverage my firm's competitive advantage and business development opportunities.

Ultimately, the list of resources are comprehensive. The more data available to analyze, the better informed your decisions will be.

### WHERE DO YOU START?

I've heard experts ask the question: "What is the central challenge facing business leaders today?" The answer points to addressing the need for change. It's been repeated so many times that it's become a truism. The problem with "the need for change" is that it strongly suggests that change is a one-time event — that a company need only go from point A to point B to succeed. This flawed thinking only takes us to a new place of stuck. Meanwhile, the rest of the market moves on and leaves others behind.

Regardless of how seriously law firms focus on strategic planning, goals are tied most directly to driving revenue. We saw this pattern emerge in Big Law, in particular, during the post-recession period where law firms took steps to protect profits, primarily by cost cutting. Only recently

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have firms finally realized that cutting expenses is *not* the most direct path to protect profits as much as driving revenue, which has become the new [not really] hot trend.

### ASK THE BURNING QUESTIONS

In crafting a marketing and business development strategy, for either an individual attorney or a practice group, until you engage in meaningful discussion that poses targeted questions focused on growing market share, strategy speculation is the likely outcome. However, the market doesn't speculate — it dictates. Below are four impactful questions that will help drive strategy.

There are intelligence resources that CMOs can leverage to help answer these provocative questions.

#### 1. What are we doing now?

This may seem like a silly question, though surprisingly, attorneys likely have different perspectives. It is important to align everyone's viewpoint to one concept, at the outset. The important thing here is to be brutally honest and not project *who/what you want to be* onto your current reality.

#### 2. Is what we're doing now effective?

Sometimes, CMOs must take their attorneys' responses at face value and look elsewhere for real clues to adequately answer this question. Some pieces of the answer may be reflected in firm financial data. Ultimately, CMOs may need to go outside the firm to arrive at a definitive answer via client interviews or feedback surveys. The conclusions drawn from a situation analysis will help create or illuminate a sense of urgency to effect change.

#### 3. How can we do it differently?

What are your lawyers' thoughts, especially the laterals who have had different experiences at other firms. The answer may require some due diligence research on your competition to learn how other firms are serving the same type

of client. In some cases, the response to questions one and two may lead CMOs to conclude a different path is not necessary, though I would encourage you to challenge that conclusion. Law firms that embrace change — even when it appears that nothing is broken — will make discoveries about their services that differentiate them that can add value to their clients.

#### 4. What does success look like?

This may be the hardest question of all. Defining success must be tied back to stated goals (driving revenue, remember?), or whatever benchmark has been established to capture and drive revenue. What does the picture look like? This is the vision that the lawyers must articulate to drive the firm's business development strategy. The vision need not be exact, yet it must be clear. And, *yes*, there is a difference.

### WHAT ARE THE DATA RESOURCES?

In the law firms in which I have worked, data points have taken many forms and have increasingly included a wider range of resources.

Below is a listing of my favorite data sources and how I've used them to either gain insight or identify business development targets:

**Financial data on client billings and revenue.** On the surface, this one appears self-explanatory, yet it's not the first thing lawyers consider when developing a business development strategy. This data can offer invaluable clues about your practice, including:

- Client base diversity, segmenting by industry, size, geography, etc.
- Which clients are driving revenue? I have used this information to help attorneys set business development goals that aren't specifically about revenue. For example: A practice currently has three clients driving six-figure annual fee revenue each, so we set goals

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## Comp. Intelligence

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to double that number in three years. It's tangible, measurable and is sure to increase revenue, but because it's not specifically a revenue target, the attorney was receptive to the goal.

**Legal Profiles Compiled from Docket Searches.** Both Thompson Reuters and LexisNexis have products that pull docket information and aggregate it in such a way that data may be sorted and analyzed to glean insight.

Without advocating for one tool over another, they both have similarities in that they can provide a detailed overview of a prospect's litigation history, including how many litigation events there have been, in which jurisdictions, areas of law and which firm has represented them.

As these products have become more sophisticated, we can learn about the transactional work of our targets — how many IP filings they have had, who handled them, do they have securities filings, which firms handled their M&A deals and who financed those transactions. All of this information becomes extremely useful when building a list of business development leads.

**Local business publications.** Most major metropolitan areas have a "Business Journal" that features news about the area's business community. These publications are gold mines, and most of them publish annual directories or "Books of Lists" that feature top organizations in virtually every corporate/commercial category. A word of advice: Spend the money for the digital file that includes all of the lists; it's a great investment in the firm's growth.

**Digital content aggregators.** Tools such as Manzama, Newsdesk, Drudge and others collect digital content from resources throughout the Web. They are invaluable to stay abreast of news and developments, especially once business development targets have been identified. Further, most of the services have capabilities to set specific alerts to focus on news about companies A, B and C, rather than use them

strictly as newsfeed sources. Legal-focused tools like JDSupra, Mondaq and *National Law Review* are also helpful products for disseminating content. It's astonishing how quickly lawyers become recognized as thought leaders when thousands of viewers read their content each day via these highly sophisticated aggregator tools.

**Annual reports and SEC filings of publicly-traded companies.** Financial information contained in these reports may be useful. Most useful is contact information for key executives and, more importantly, the SEC 10K filings that include the name of the lawyer and law firm that submitted the form on behalf of the company. The 10K filing also includes some other required information that may be useful in your research, including:

- Risk factors;
- Legal proceedings;
- Consolidated financial data;
- Management's analysis; and
- Ownership changes.

These forms are publicly available via the SEC's EDGAR tool (*see*, <http://bit.ly/2MHdfTY>), but some of the more sophisticated online financial tools like Yahoo! Finance and Google Finance do an excellent job of aggregating and presenting the information into a dashboard format.

**Client feedback surveys.** Information gathered from client satisfaction surveys provide valuable insight to understand client needs and wants. Successful firms recognize that it is more cost effective to retain existing clients than it is to attract new ones.

Client surveys can also confirm whether your services and delivery model meet the needs of the marketplace. While CMOs may think they have their finger on the pulse, don't be tempted by the confirmation bias. Do the research and analyze the feedback.

**Results from directory or awards submissions.** There is potential value in analyzing directory results because, as the ranking directories have become more sophisticated about their methodology, they have also become more transparent about the results.

Chambers & Partners, for example, openly welcomes a constant feedback loop. After the rankings

are published, follow up with the researcher to ask "where is there room for improvement? What did our clients say or not say? Who didn't respond to requests for feedback?" The researcher's answers can be illuminating at best, and at worst, may confirm serious deficiencies. Either way, you should want to know.

**Digital Analytics.** We live in a digital world and the data we collect from distribution, traffic access and clicks is incredibly valuable and insightful. The trick is understanding how to read the data and recognizing the imperfection of the collection process.

For a few bucks, you can dig deeply into the analytics and learn more about where the firm's website traffic originates, what visitors are searching for, and where they go next. Don't stop analyzing Web traffic. An experienced digital strategist can examine the content distribution data — who opens the emails, who clicks on the links, how long they are viewing those pages, what do they click on while there. Those click view rates are solid data points that can help identify potential business development leads. With a few qualifying follow ups, firm digital strategists may convert a lead into a solid target for new business. Firms that continuously send out random content and never do a deeper dive into the analytics are ignoring the point of this marketing tactic.

### CONCLUSION

In an economy where the demand for legal services has been largely flat or declining over the last decade, the only way to gain market share is to take it from someone else. This is the basic tenet of business development, and the market leaders are the ones that leverage their intelligence for a competitive advantage. It's important to learn as much as you can about the market — the competitors, prospective clients, market forces, trends and news and barriers to entry. This leads me back to the statement at the beginning of this article: *The more data there is to analyze, the better informed strategic business development decisions and strategies will be going forward.*

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## Those Were the Days: Lessons from Silicon Valley's Marketing Culture

By David McCann

After graduating from law school, I was fortunate to spend the early part of my marketing career in Silicon Valley working for technology companies that ranged in size from 30,000 employees to those with just a couple dozen brave souls. That was during a time when people thought a new kid on the block named Google was crazy to compete with Yahoo!, Apple looked like it was on its last leg and we had to type "http://" whenever we ventured out into the mysterious World Wide Web.

And, while being in the heart of the technology sector during that exciting time certainly had its share of challenges and frustrations, there were elements of the corporate culture and characteristics of the passionate employees that helped shape my perspective on the critical role marketing could (and should) play in driving tangible and bottom-line business results. Further, I am confident that those shaping influences, when applied to law firms, can help us legal marketers realize even greater returns for our internal and external clients.

### RESULTS. RESULTS. RESULTS.

Hall of Fame basketball player and coach John Wooden said: "Don't mistake activity for achievement." His words highlight the difference between work and honest to goodness getting stuff done. Phrased

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differently, just because you are busy does not mean you are accomplishing anything.

Far too often, legal marketers use metrics that show activity, not results, and even fewer connect the results to bottom-line metrics that matter to firm leadership. In addition, marketers frequently frame discussions in terms of costs. This approach simply perpetuates the perception that marketing is a cost center. From my experience in successful technology environments, every effort should be made to use return on investment justifications for every marketing endeavor, to forecast short- and long-term results, and to demonstrate marketing's impact on hard metrics such as revenue and growth. By talking about marketing in the same financial language as that used by firm leadership, CMOs may establish and elevate the marketing function as a key revenue driver alongside other mainstay business development activities.

### OUTSIDE-IN VS. INSIDE-OUT THINKING

For some time, there appears to have been two ruling paradigms in business: the inside-out approach and the outside-in approach. The inside-out approach is guided by the belief that the inner strengths and capabilities of an organization will make the organization prevail. The outside-in approach, the one embraced by most successful technology companies, is instead guided by the belief that client value creation, orientation, and experience are the keys to success.

From an outside-in approach, long-term value is a consequence of listening and providing value to clients and helping them achieve their objectives better than the competition while providing a seamless client experience. The ideal organizational culture is market- and client-oriented and the targeted client segments are the source of inspiration and development. There is also

a strong belief that if clients are not satisfied with the solutions offered, the business will suffer and value will diminish. Alternatively, with an inside-out approach to business, you would likely see effective use of company resources and core competencies as the main, if not sole, driver of value. In the so-called "new normal" era that we have heard echoed by legal industry experts for some time, many law firms are not rethinking their approach to how they do things. Moreover, if they are, it is from the inside-out (rightsizing) rather than from the outside in (creating greater value for clients and potential clients). They often seem more focused on short-term gains rather than on providing greater value to clients. Law firms can no longer get a short-term gain by simply raising rates and/or demanding more billable hours.

### INNOVATE

As we all know, change is the only constant across today's business landscape. Technology companies, especially startups, can expand at a rapid pace because they are incredibly agile. Similarly, they can transform their products, services and business models with ease in order to better meet the needs of customers. When combined with their online marketing prowess and operational excellence, the ideal environment for sustained business growth is created.

Law firms are notoriously slow to adapt and are generally resistant to change, so it is now more important than ever to learn from the technology startup model of rapid iteration. In other words, it is time for law firms to free themselves from outdated processes and business models, and start innovating. How firms innovate (and ultimately create greater opportunities for growth) can take various forms, such as adopting new fee structures, enhancing the client intake process, or embracing automation.

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## ***Prof. Development***

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For example, make software a fundamental part of your business operations. It is the key to deriving the most output from the least input. In other words, it enables a firm to scale and maximize its profitability. The key to remember is that times are changing: Be willing to experiment and try new tactics. Don't ever do anything just because "it's always been done that way," and always put the needs of your clients first when deciding where to go next.

### **TRAIN THE 'SALES' PEOPLE**

For a variety of reasons, we tend not to refer to attorneys as sales people. Regardless of titles, one of their primary roles (especially as they advance in their career) is to do just that — sell. They sell their services and their brands, as well as those of their firm and colleagues. One of the things that impressed me most throughout my technology career was the degree to which companies educated their sales teams and equipped them with the tools necessary to succeed. I realize, for the most part, that selling widgets and legal services are different. However, the one constant is that "buyers" want to hear compelling arguments that pertain to their specific needs and objectives.

When we launch brands, offices or services in the legal industry, we often focus too much time on the traditional marketing aspects of the process (website, public relations,

events, client announcements, etc.). Don't forget the attorneys! The problem is that selling (or developing business) today is challenging — really challenging. Time is precious, decision makers have competing demands, and it is usually easier to remain with the status quo than invest time in change. So do not skimp on the business development materials and training, in particular helping attorneys craft compelling value propositions that clearly communicate key competitive differentiators.

### **ACKNOWLEDGE AND REWARD TALENT**

Professional development and advancement are important topics in every industry. I recall having some apprehension as I entered the technology sector following law school. I did not have what I would call "technology" skills and was not sure if/where I would find an appropriate career fit. I considered myself to be a smart and motivated individual. I accepted every challenge. I worked hard. I succeeded. And my career took off. The longer I spent in technology, the more I realized it is an industry where there was no normal. Just as the industry itself experienced rapid change, its employees were the ones who needed to adjust to and respond to that change. The ones selected to meet those challenges didn't necessarily have the presumed skill set or experience match — few, if any, did. The positions were often for roles that had not been seen before. But what those individuals had was the drive, curiosity, confidence

and leadership profile that virtually guaranteed success.

I am often contacted by friends and colleagues within the legal marketing community asking for my guidance on filling particular positions or for my opinion on current candidates. When looking at internal candidates, I suggest rewarding talent, not tenure. For external candidates, target baseline skills, attitude and personality. Don't simply look for someone who has the "right" job summary or AmLaw 200 firm on his/her resume. You just might be surprised at what you find.

### **CONCLUSION**

The longer we work in any given industry, the more resistant we tend to be to external ideas or approaches. Such a mindset, while certainly fodder for a future article, is virtually guaranteed to slow, if not grind to a halt, your marketing and business development efforts. Examining what is happening across other industries and/or applying what we have learned from working in those sectors to the legal space can foster new ways of thinking, inspire new strategies and, if done correctly, drive a new level of results.

My days in technology marketing taught me many lessons, not the least of which was to never settle — to always strive for our products and services to be the first to market, the best in their class or the only ones of their kind. Such a philosophy not only has its place in legal marketing, it is one that we owe to ourselves, our firms and our clients.



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## ***You're Fired!***

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Paul chose to work with a career coach who helped him establish deadlines and goals for his job search.

Networking is key to finding your next position. Compile a list of contacts and start making calls. Schedule time to meet others for coffee or lunch. Let people know you are looking for a new job. There is nothing to be embarrassed about. It's likely that you know others whom

have been in similar situations. Likely, you connected them with others who could lead them closer to a new position.

### **MOVE FORWARD**

Be prepared — it may take months to land your next position. Whether you quickly secure a new job, accept a part-time position or join the gig economy until something surfaces, you need to keep moving forward. Most people lose jobs at some point in their career. Learn from the experience.

After several months of searching, Paul landed a position as Marketing Manager with another law firm. He received a higher salary and stronger benefit package. Losing a job is not the end of the world and for some — it is just the beginning of a great new adventure.



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## How Law Firms May Ensure Social Media Compliance

By Marguerita Cheng

How can law firms ensure social media compliance? What are the rules and restrictions to creating profiles, publishing content and communicating with prospects and clients? This article answers these questions and provides tips to help firms create a sound social media policy.

### LAW FIRMS AND ATTORNEYS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Paid Facebook ads, YouTube video promotion, Twitter tweets — social media is one of the most important and effective channels in digital marketing today. Social media is a powerful platform to promote business, but it is important to establish certain policies and procedures, first.

### LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

There are restrictions and compliance rules that attorneys and law firms must follow. Among these are:

- Attorneys are prohibited from posting false or misleading information on a website or social media, which includes inaccurate or outdated credentials. Therefore, it's important

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## Leadership

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groups, will ultimately hurt the efforts of a department, the firm, and ultimately everyone's ability to be successful. Creating a collaborative culture means creating a "constructive" culture.

to review all content created by any third party, such as marketing, communications or public relations firm, before publishing.

- Bar association guidelines and federal regulations also restrict how a firm may advertise and promote legal services. Ethical rules also apply to all professional online activities, including social media.
- Ethical regulations forbid lawyers to associate themselves with certain individuals on Facebook and other SM platforms, such as an adverse party or the judge on active cases.

### WHAT'S ALLOWED?

On social media, lawyers are allowed to publish information about their professional and personal lives. The latter often helps reflect human insight, which may have a positive effect on prospective clients. After all, individuals like to do business with others whom they know, like and trust.

### TIPS FOR CREATING A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

When the firm decides to embark upon its social media journey, all campaigns must be ethically compliant from the start. The best way to achieve this is by creating a social media policy. The goal is to create a dynamic policy that encourages the use of this relatively new technology while avoiding institutionalizing a static policy with too many inflexible rules. See the ABA's guidance, "How to Create a Law Firm Social Media Policy," <http://bit.ly/2tkGBOV>.

According to global culture experts at Human Synergetics, a constructive culture is one "where people gain enjoyment from their work, develop themselves and take on new and interesting activities. It also means the culture involves expectations for being supportive, constructive, and open to influence

### PROFILES

Consider implementing a pre-approval process for newly-created social media profiles. If the firm grants access to profiles for non-lawyer staff members, make it mandatory to assign an admin ID to each profile. In establishing a social media policy, also define rules for the use of your firm's logo for profile images and whether to include the firm name, address, phone number and website address.

### PUBLISHING CONTENT

The firm should establish specific guidelines for the type of content it allows. Influencing factors are professionalism, ethics and client and company representations. The prevailing question should be: What are the consequences of publishing this particular piece of information?

Social media is about relevance, flexibility and timeliness. The marketing department should propose a process by which to monitor and pre-approve content to avoid becoming stuck in endless rounds of approvals.

### IMPROVE OVER TIME

The firm's social media policy should be designed to evolve as regulatory requirements continue to change. It's important to stay current with the latest developments to ensure compliance at all times.

### CONCLUSION

Social media has created unprecedented marketing opportunities for law firms and lawyers. By establishing a thoughtful social media policy and improving it over time, CMOs can ensure that their firms comply with the rules and restrictions for social media and realize its benefits, simultaneously.

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in dealing with one another. The constructive type of culture creates a high performing organization. Compare this to one that is Passive/Defensive, which involves expectations for conforming, following the rules and making a good impression or expectations for being non-

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## Leadership

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committal, never being blamed for mistakes and staying out of trouble.”

“A self-actualizing, constructive culture includes cultural norms where reward systems are clearly tied to effort and performance; where managers rely upon knowledge and expertise as their primary sources of power (as opposed to relying on their position or their control over resources) and where the firm’s mission and values are communicated and reinforced through role models, ceremonies and other cultural examples.”

We can measure the effectiveness of a culture, its leaders and managers through assessments that provide statistical data and analytics for where a firm, its departments and its offices are today with respect to a collaborative and constructive culture, and where the gaps are. The data is quite remarkable and accurate and helps to set the firm’s strategy in motion for a focused effort.

Collaborative cultures soar in profitability, talent acquisition and retention, client retention and client service compared to cultures where collaboration is not a strategic backbone of the organization.

Collaboration is a key to many good activities including:

- Retention and expansion of existing clients;
- Selection and implementation of an important resource;
- Hiring and integration of new lawyers, laterals, business professionals and staff;
- Working in partnership with clients across all levels of the firm;

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- Increasing client service; and
- Increasing firm profits.

Building a culture of collaboration takes more than saying, “We are focused on having a collaborative culture,” and handing out Heidi Gardner’s latest white paper or research on the topic at a firm retreat (and yes, this is what some firms are doing). And, while all research and data confirming collaboration’s outcomes is the way to go, it takes a top-down commitment at every level. What Gardner’s work does show us is that a collaborative culture outperforms other cultures. Yet, in today’s law firms, there is work to be done. Reward (at all levels) must support the norms expected and not, for example, just top business getters.

Building a culture of collaboration and respect takes time, requires measurement (what is our current culture now?), and a strategic plan with implementation activities built in for every department and area of the firm. Tough to get started on this? Not sure the firm is ready? Start with one department that an individual leader/manager will oversee. Once the team is in motion to operate functionally and constructively, the results will be incredibly clear.

Here are some pointers for heading in the right direction:

- Start by conducting an assessment using statistical data assessments to measure where the team is now (whether it’s firm, department, operations team, office, etc.). Ideally, the assessment phase begins with the firm’s leadership team so they may examine their group’s culture and norms and begin to understand the measures, the norms, and the potential gaps between expectations and behaviors.
- Provide a day, at least, of training to help firm/team members understand what the baseline measures mean and how each individual

may contribute to the overall success of the ultimate, long-term strategy.

- Execute on a clear, decisive game plan for closing the gap between where the team is today and the team’s desired (Human Synergistics would call this “ideal”) culture.
- Reinforce what the team is trying to achieve and what it will mean to accomplish a truly collaborative approach to the business goals.
- Measure 12 to 18 months from the initial baseline measure and celebrate where the team is now compared to its initial baseline

Something to keep in mind is that creating a collaborative culture takes time and effort. We know from Dr. Larry Richard’s ongoing testing within the legal community that lawyers test the highest in skepticism, the lowest in resilience, the highest in impatience and the highest in autonomy (just a few of the results from testing over 8,000 lawyers) (*see*, [www.lawyerbrain.com](http://www.lawyerbrain.com)).

These traits will create a high tide of resistance for transforming the culture, will be worth acknowledging right up front with the firm members, and will be necessary to keep in mind when moving toward a culture of collaboration. Fortunately, there is more than enough statistical data if one were to request it, to show that the ultimate outcomes are worth the effort and transformation.

While this article may make building a collaborative culture seem somewhat simple, it is as much work to build it as it is to sustain. It is leadership and people-dependent to be successful. With leadership and the firm working together, the firm will jump to new levels of success and profits. It is worth the investment of time and focus.

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