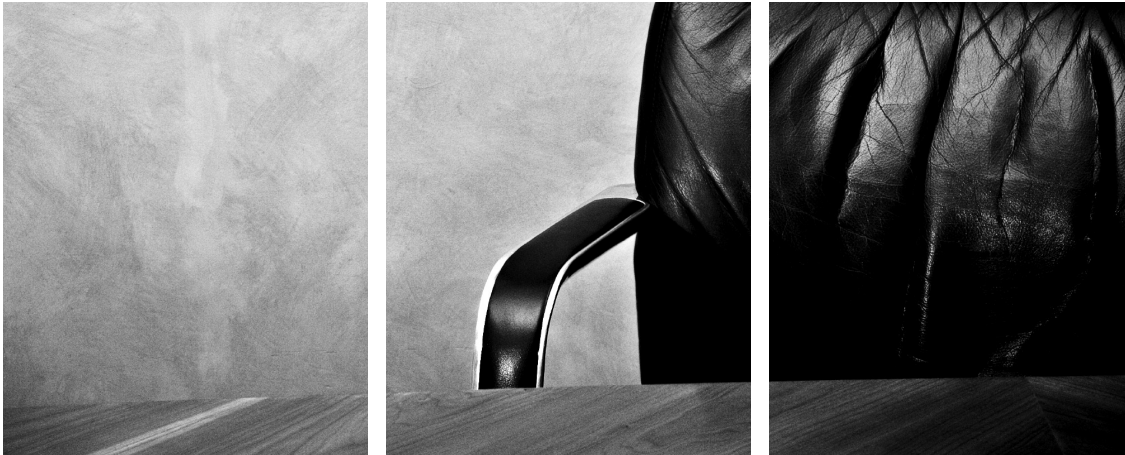


Leadership development in the legal profession

LINDSEY MUIR AND PAUL KEARNS



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Executive summary

WITH DEREGULATION looming and issues, such as staff retention, succession planning and performance measurement slowly coming to the fore, leadership is not just a prerequisite for the growth and development of a law firm, but it is a necessity for firm survival in such a competitive and dynamic sphere. Effective leadership can make a difference between those that win and those that lose the game.

The development of the concept of leadership has centred essentially on two main schools of thought – are leaders born or made? The shifting consensus points to the belief that while leadership may come naturally to some, for others, leadership skills need to be developed and nurtured.

This report is aimed at law firm professionals: from those who occupy senior positions within law firms, to those who currently are, or are considering undertaking leadership roles. The requirement for leadership in any organisation is likely to exist at different levels, especially as the size and structure of law firms become more complex. This report aims to discuss leadership development in the legal profession by introducing and examining different leadership models, ideas and styles, which can be adopted according to the current business environment and the changing legal services sector. It also identifies some key techniques, which are being deployed to develop leadership in forward-thinking organisations, as well as discussing the potential benefits of investing in leadership development programmes.

In Chapter 1, the importance of leadership development in the legal profession and how leadership differs from the role of management are discussed. The chapter continues with identifying the levels at which leadership can exist within a firm, and the types of activities involved in leading the firm or team.

Chapter 2 explores the different leadership models developed through time. While there is no one model to suit all, this chapter enables the reader to reflect on how he/she should or would undertake the role, and evaluates whether the leadership style he/she adopts is appropriate for the firm. It summarises the types of skills required for effective leadership and looks at different styles of leadership that one can adopt, depending upon the type of project being undertaken and led.

Chapter 3 examines the importance of leadership in strategy development and the change management process. It focuses on three key models of organisational culture, managing change and force field analysis, and identifies the key issues a leader needs to be aware of when managing change.

Chapter 4 discusses three key approaches to developing leaders, which are currently employed across different industry sectors, as well as law firms. This part of the report evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches, and how they might be relevant to law firms. It also opens a discussion on the importance of succession planning in the event of retirement, illness and crises.

Chapters 5 and 6 provide a practical guide to developing leaders and measuring the returns on investing in a leadership strategy. Chapter 5 follows a classic strategic planning framework and illustrates what sort of indicators can be used to reveal the full implications and consequences of leadership. Chapter 6 considers the hard tangible value of leadership – measuring the returns on investment of the strategy, and the impact and influence of leadership styles on staff performance.

Part 2 of the report comprises case studies from law firms, management consultants and specialists in the field of coaching – a major developmental tool for leadership. They illustrate how firms are developing leaders, provide international examples of both strong and weak leadership, make the link between the role of the leader and the business strategy of a law firm, and provide real-life examples of different development techniques in practice.

About the authors

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