

Lawyer Work Redesign for Leadership Development

- A Proposal for Enlarging the Scope and Challenge, Responsibility and Accountability, and Feedback in the Lawyer's Work*

Why redesign lawyers' work?

Using a survey of the perceptions of legal work of 233 lawyers of varying post-qualification experience levels in 14 countries, the influence of six factors on leadership development and on the effectiveness of firm leadership was investigated.

Of the six factors considered, work design emerged as the only significant influence on lawyers' leadership development and the most significant of three factors which influence the effectiveness of firm leadership.

Of the lawyers surveyed, over 75% did not strongly agree that their work possesses the five job characteristics which shape leadership capabilities and lawyers at the 0-4 PQE level ranked the characteristics of their work significantly lower than other PQE levels did; indicating that there is much room for improvement of the job characteristics of the work of lawyers.

The analysis showed that by increasing its mean score for work design by 1 point; a firm could increase its mean score for leadership development by 0.51 and its mean score for leadership effectiveness would increase by 0.54.

This proposal offers law firms and departments a way to address some of the gaps in their approach to developing lawyers as leaders and achieve greater effectiveness as organisations.

Highlights

The proposal offers a number of advantages for enhancing firm/department viability:

1. Lawyers, and in turn their clients, would be satisfied with their work as they participate more in defining the strategic direction of their work.
2. The combined capacity of the legal practice for quality work and innovation will be improved as lawyers focus on work which provides meaningfulness, accountability and responsibility.
3. Lawyers will be better able to learn from and derive fulfilment from their work as they participate more in influencing the work and training they receive.

*Based on the research project titled "Leadership Development: Exploring the Content and Context of the Lawyer's Work and the Requirements of Legal Practice" carried out by Funmi Oyefuga in July–August 2009 as part of the MBA in Legal Practice. The research report can be downloaded at <http://www.mbalegalpractice.com>.

Background

This proposal is based on the outcome of research which identifies the factors most important for the development and effectiveness of leadership in legal practice.

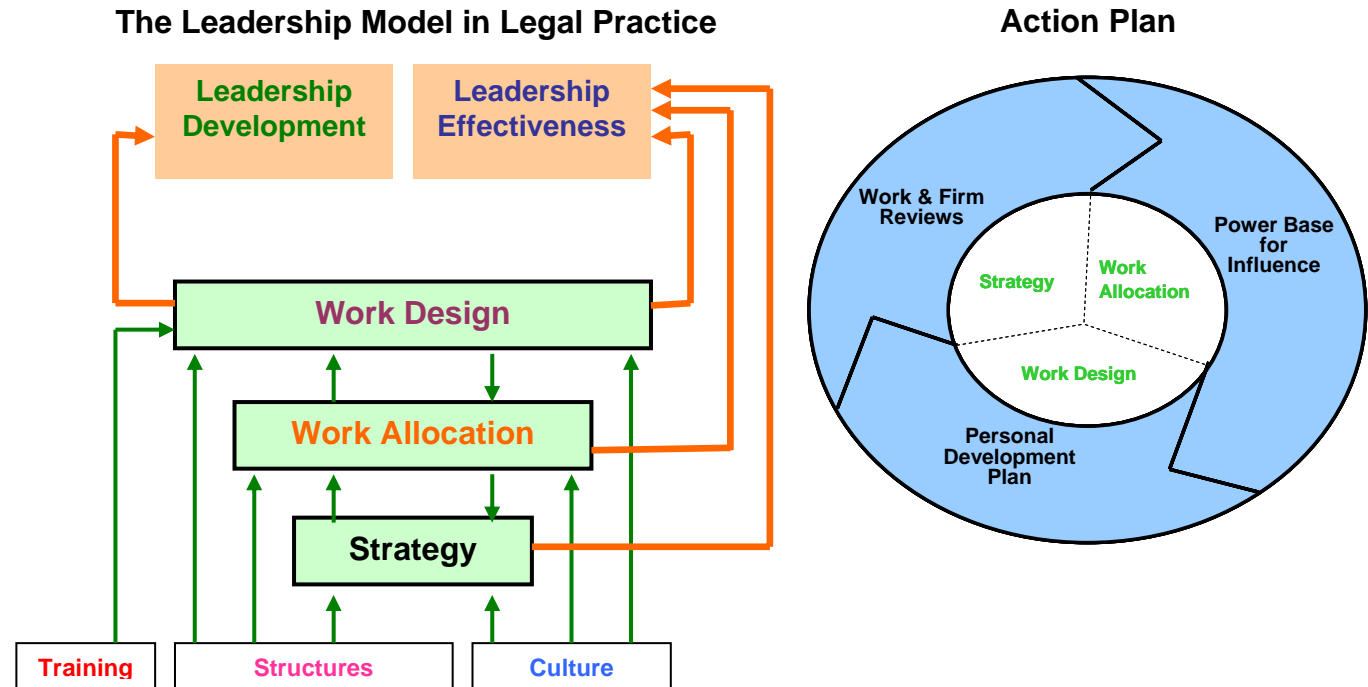
The proposed approach for redesigning lawyers' work is based on the model for leadership development in legal practice developed in the course of the research.

The leadership model shows that

1. Only work design produces a direct outcome for leadership development, while work allocation and strategy in turn influence work design, and structures, culture and training provide support for the process.
2. The importance of firm structures, culture and training is in providing a foundation for strategy, work allocation and work design which are the real drivers of outcomes for leadership effectiveness.

The action plan model provides an overview of the three-part process proposed for embedding leadership development in legal practice which begins with a review of the characteristics of work, progresses with the building of a power base for influence and culminates in personal development planning for work redesign.

It also shows how each influencing factor drives each stage in the process.



The Lawyer Work Redesign Programme

Technological and process improvements, as well as client pressures for cost efficiency will substantially change the work of lawyers. The proposed programme lets lawyers drive a greater part of that change and in the process develop leadership.

Overview

The lawyer work redesign programme is based on the idea that the best way to develop leadership and improve the viability and leadership effectiveness of a law firm or department is through the daily work of its lawyers and the opportunities such work presents for lawyers to make a contribution towards that improvement.

The programme guides lawyers through a self-directed process which consists of

1. online work reviews and firm assessment surveys
2. three one-hour individual consultations, which can be over the phone or one-on-one
3. practical reflection, research and planning tasks undertaken between consultations, either independently or in a small group.

Need

Legal practice is made up of self-managing lawyers who want to take responsibility for their own development. But there is a huge gap between what is expected of lawyers and what they are equipped by their normal education and professional development to do. Coaching services in legal practice are often only offered to partners and senior

executives not to lawyers and non-manager lawyers, but leadership evaluation forms part of the appraisals of all lawyers.

This programme helps lawyers review the strengths and weaknesses of their approach to leadership and guides them through a process for making the most of their work as a tool for development. Through the programme, they will work out for themselves, what kind of practice they want to have and how best to gain the support of others as they develop that practice and align their needs with the strategic objectives of their firms.

Objectives

1. To better understand their role in the firm and in working with other functions (people and processes) to formulate and achieve the firm's strategy and objectives with respect to clients and in their sectors and the market generally.
2. To identify value creation drivers and challenges in the firm and formulate a strategy and implementation plan for how they can influence at least one of these and what functions (people and processes) they can draw help or guidance from in the process.
3. To identify opportunities for enlarged responsibility and accountability,

variety and challenge; and to redesign their jobs to make the most of these opportunities.

4. To develop a personal approach to professional development by identifying individual skill gaps and matching available training and development to the needs.
5. Introduction to the balanced score card and what success looks like on different fronts, not just fee earning.

Benefits

1. Personal development creates economic value as market performance flows not from managers, but from the initiative, creativity and skills of lawyers themselves.
2. By placing the individual lawyer at the centre of the development process, the programme makes every lawyer responsible and accountable to varying degrees for driving the achievement of business goals and objectives.
3. Lawyers are able to clarify their values and their reasons for practising law and to identify ways to integrate these values and personal aspirations into the tasks that make up their daily work.

Programme Outline

There are two options available – the group option and the individual option.

A – Individual Option

1. The review - The lawyer takes two short surveys assessing the characteristics of his work and his individual leadership. The results are presented in a short written review, highlighting areas which need to be addressed by the lawyer. See sample here.
2. The influence consultation - Following the review, the lawyer has an initial one-hour telephone consultation during which he clarifies his understanding of his role in the firm and in working with others to formulate and achieve the firm's strategy and works out situations from which he can develop his influence at work. He then takes time for reflection, research and to formulate a strategy and implementation plan for influencing value creation drivers and strategic objectives and how he can draw help or guidance from others in the process.
3. The personal development consultation - Having completed the process of establishing his influence base with the plan, the lawyer has another one-hour telephone consultation to clarify the plan and identify necessary skills and opportunities for improving the characteristics of their work. He then

takes time to set out a vision, strategy and action plan for undertaking activities over a period which further enhance his leadership. These activities include client work, management work and training, acting as mentor for others, product and client development, etc. At the end of this process, a final telephone consultation is held to review the plan and any milestones and introduce the balanced scorecard for continuous review.

B – Group Option

1. The review - Each lawyer in the group takes two short surveys assessing the characteristics of his work and his individual leadership. The results are presented to the lawyer and the group contact in a short written review, highlighting areas which need to be addressed by the lawyer. See sample here.

The lawyers also take two short surveys assessing the characteristics of their team, and work allocation systems, strategy and structures. The results are presented in a short written review, highlighting areas which need to be addressed by the group.

2. The group consultation – After all the lawyers have taken the review and assessed the group, the group meets to discuss the assessment and works out its priorities and how it will go about achieving them.

3. The influence consultation - Following the review, each lawyer has an initial one-hour telephone consultation during which he clarifies his understanding of his role in the firm and in working with others to formulate and achieve the firm's strategy and works out situations from which he can develop his influence at work, using the group strategy as a guide. He then takes time for reflection, research and to formulate a strategy and implementation plan for influencing value creation drivers and strategic objectives and how he can draw help or guidance from others in the process.

4. The personal development consultation - Having completed the process of establishing his influence base with the plan, the lawyer has another one-hour telephone consultation to clarify the plan and identify necessary skills and opportunities for improving the characteristics of their work. He then takes time to set out a vision, strategy and action plan for undertaking activities over a period which further enhance his leadership, in line with group objectives. These activities include client work, management work and training, acting as mentor for others, product and client development, etc. At the end of this process, a final telephone consultation is held to review the plan and any milestones and introduce the balanced scorecard for continuous review.

5. Based on the personal development plans produced by all the lawyers, areas of alignment and suggestions for working together and monitoring progress will be drawn out for the group.

Target Participants

This programme is aimed at both private practice and in-house lawyers. The non-partner, non-manager lawyer, in particular lawyers with less than 10 years PQE; stand to gain immensely from the programme because the typical nature of their roles, with its inherent lack of variety, responsibility and accountability often results in dissatisfaction and infrequent opportunities to practice leadership. This needs to be redesigned to better suit the role holder and enhance firm/department viability.

All lawyers who feel they will benefit from redesigning their work are encouraged to take advantage of the programme.

Requirements

The programme costs £300 per participant. Participants should aim to complete the programme within three months of taking the initial reviews in order to keep the learning relevant.

During the programme, participants will be required to keep a development portfolio of their reflections on their work, as well as reflections on each stage of the programme and the plans produced in the process.

An evaluation questionnaire will also be completed by participants at the end of the programme.

Further assessments to measure return on investment can be carried out one year after completing the programme.

Programme Director

Funmi Oyefuga is responsible for the development of the lawyer work redesign programme and is the point of contact for lawyers and their organisations.

She holds an MBA in Legal Practice from Nottingham Trent University and has knowledge of the challenges and opportunities for leadership development and practice inherent in the way lawyers work, having carried out the research which forms the basis of this programme on lawyers.

Funmi's experience includes practising as a commercial lawyer, and supporting the work of lawyers as a business development advisor in an international law firm.

Participants can therefore take advantage of the multiple perspectives her expertise and field-based research bring to the programme.

Contact information

To have a deeper discussion about how your firm or department might benefit from this proposal, please contact:

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Or use my on-line scheduling system at <http://my.timedriver.com/557DH> to choose a convenient time for me to call you.