

## LETR

### Request for comments about skills-gap training and support for those working in the legal profession

#### Response

I have been involved in coaching and training lawyers for the past 12 years and I list below some of the topics that I regularly come across where even the most basic knowledge is frequently lacking – at all levels, from law firm leaders, to partners, to associates:

#### Leadership styles

- Awareness of styles other than command and control (telling)
- Learning to flex / use a range of styles (e.g. pace-setting, visionary, democratic, affiliative, coaching)

#### Influencing skills

- Appropriate use of assertiveness / understanding of difference from aggression
- Awareness of / value of using a coaching style – not always telling / solving others' problems
- The power of asking for views / taking soundings before deciding – how to do this without ceding decision-making responsibility
- Communicating decisions once made, with reasons
- Over-reliance on *the written word* – memos, emails, etc.
- Under-use / lack of appreciation of value of face-to-face communications
- Limited awareness of range of influencing styles – tell, ask, sell

#### Understanding motivation in others

- Knowledge that not all people are the same / are motivated by the same things
- Awareness of the variety of factors that can motivate individuals – beyond pay and bonus
- Avoiding actions likely to de-motivate

#### Delegation & Supervision

- Knowing there are several styles – e.g. Hersey & Blanchard, *Situational Leadership*
- Knowing when to use which style
- Planning / building in appropriate levels of supervision / oversight
- Reluctance to delegate – (“Is it unfair? Am I dumping?” etc.)
- Reluctance to delegate – (Partners clinging to work; not understanding the business model / need to push work down)
- Poor delegation – dumping, with inadequate briefing and/or authority given to delegee

#### Giving feedback

- How to provide specific, well-timed feedback that is constructive and motivational so that the recipient learns and grows as a result

#### Meeting skills

- How to run a meeting
- Good process to ensure everyone participates

My observations of the experience of coaching

- At the higher levels – managing partners, department heads – coaching is a powerful and fast way to support professional development and (if required) behaviour change
- It also has a valuable and effective role to play at times of transition – e.g. new-partner promotions, support for lateral hire partners to speed up integration and effectiveness

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