



## Lawyers v Great Leaders

Law firms are slowly waking up to the fact that their lawyers and partners need to be great leaders. The traditional command and control approach to leadership (adopted by many law firms) is becoming less effective and does little to empower or motivate staff. In a climate of fear, lawyers become frightened of making key decisions, as a result they become masters of procrastination with a negative impact on productivity, client care and profits.

But how many lawyers / partners are comfortable thinking of themselves as managers, let alone leaders? Yet, lawyers are required to exercise and demonstrate leadership skills on a daily basis – attracting new business, advising clients and managing colleagues etc.

There is no doubt in my mind, that the real challenge is getting lawyers to think of themselves as leaders and more importantly develop their desire to be great leaders - a rare jewel indeed.

One of my passions (both as a leader myself and now as a training consultant) has been to understand how successful leaders operate. How do they exert their influence and power yet still maintain integrity? How do they create that strong emotional connection so that people willingly follow and accept their advice?

Daniel Goleman in his book *The New Leaders* argues that the “difference that makes the difference” lies in how successful a person is in developing their emotional intelligence (EQ) – how leaders handle themselves and their relationships.

Leaders who have mastered four or more of the positive leadership and communication styles (mentioned below) are the most effective.

“Such leaders don’t mechanically match their style to fit a checklist of situations – they are far more fluid. They are exquisitely sensitive to the impact they are achieving on others and seamlessly adjust their style to get the best results”.

## Goleman's Leadership Styles

- Visionary – appropriate when a new direction is needed
- Coaching- connects what a person wants with organisational goals
- Affiliative – building harmony
- Democratic – valuing people's inputs- this style builds "buy in" or consensus
- Pacesetter – Can be challenging. If poorly executed it can produce negative results
- Commanding – good in a crisis. Can generate a negative reaction if misused.

**What can you do?** The secret is in building your self- awareness. Recognise whether you have a default leadership style when the going gets tough. The secret of great leaders is that they have the flexibility to adapt their style to the situation. Practise using different styles of leadership and notice the difference.

Whilst things run smoothly and are new, motivation may not be an issue. It becomes an issue, when results are poor and the momentum is lost. What then is needed is a way to link the values of each individual (what is important to them) and their organisation to a vivid and irresistible vision with all players equally committed to success.

Promote a "can do attitude" and "we will do whatever it takes to ensure success". Paint a vision and make it come alive. Have passion for your vision. To follow, people must feel that they can reach for that shared vision without compromising their own or their organisations, beliefs and values.

Would you like to use this article? Reprints are welcome so long as the article and by-line are published intact and all links made live if contained in e-zines etc.

### **About The Author:**

Jane Wintringham publishes her Leading Women Lawyers newsletter for women lawyers and is for everyone interested in developing their talent.

[www.leadingwomenlawyers.co.uk](http://www.leadingwomenlawyers.co.uk)