

To Lead or Not to Lead: That is the Question

By David Giuliano, Business Coach

Whether you run a solo practice or you have 30 employees working within your firm, effective leadership is the solution to 90% of your everyday challenges.

I am passionate about leadership because I've seen the difference it makes. For example, I've witnessed how much financial and emotional balance my clients achieve after they've redefined or built new leadership within their firms. The results are infinite not only to the bottom line but even more so to yourself as you transform from living a reactive reality to a proactive one.

There are a thousand things (at least) that attorneys should be taught in law school, but aren't. Leadership is number one on my list. Why? Because, like doctors, lawyers are seen as authority figures, yet are rarely taught how to be leaders. Many lawyers I meet with struggle to find some kind of control over their practices yet never look at themselves or lack of leadership as the solution.

Problem #1: Do you value leadership?

When I ask attorneys "Do you see yourself as a leader?" most of the time there's a pregnant pause before an unconvincing "Yes." It's not surprising to discover that generally they're not getting what they want from their practice, employees or clients simply because their *perception* of leadership is equally unconvincing ... and undervalued.

Tip: Ask yourself "Am I leading myself?" "How do I lead my employees?" "How do I lead my clients?" The answers to these questions will give you a good indication of where you are now and what direction you would like to take into your future.



Problem #2: Do you want to lead?

I've met many attorneys who are in a leadership position yet have no desire to lead, and over the years I've been given many different reasons why. For example, "I don't want to babysit" or "I've been doing this for so long, I no longer have the patience" or "I no longer want the responsibility." Admitting this to themselves is hard because they fear it will lead them to insurmountable consequences for their firm. It's a huge problem, but all I see is a whole lot of solution underneath just waiting to be unleashed. This kind of honesty can truly transform a practice.

Tip: Make a list of all the leadership responsibilities you no longer want. This is the first step toward a "duties list" of the person you may want to promote or hire to take them over. What percentage of time are you spending in leadership now? If you no longer had leadership responsibilities, what could you accomplish and what would be the impact to your firm?

Problem #3: If you don't lead, everybody else will.

The cost of poor leadership is tremendous. The tough part is that, like many problems, the cost is hidden within a working practice. One of the best examples I can give is the high cost of employee turnover. You don't see onboarding, training, and lost-opportunity costs on the bottom of your financial statement, but the loss is there. Lack of leadership works the same way: you don't see the direct impact on the firm until you start to address and correct the problems.

Tip: If you are not managing your practice, who is? What outside circumstances dictate how your practice runs (i.e. clients, deadlines, cash flow)? The answers to these questions will help you see where your practice is out of your control, how much of its operation is reactive and how much is proactive, or could be changed to be.

If you find yourself frustrated that your practice is out of control, being led by forces inside and out – everybody but you – it's time to take action.

I believe there's a great leader in everyone. You already chose to be a leader when you chose to become a lawyer. Maybe you didn't quite see it that way, but I do.

Let's discover the great leader in you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After a highly successful, 25-year career in the automotive industry, New Jersey native David Giuliano realized his true calling. It was his gift of conflict resolution, which ultimately led him to the world of professional coaching. David went back to school to hone his natural abilities and earn the professional credentials needed. As a student at The Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching (IPEC), he realized that the fundamental key to life is being able to connect with other people, to information and to living in general. This insight became the impetus for his mantra "it's all about connection." In 2008, David founded Without Boundaries Coaching and since then he has successfully served hundreds of business professionals and small to mid-size companies with conflict resolution and business expansion support. His coaching practice is built not just on theory or what he learned in coaching programs, but largely as a result of boots on the ground business experience. Although David currently practices in Los Angeles, he services numerous clients across the country. He is a member of the International Coach Federation and a highly regarded member of the St. Monica Catholic Community.



Image courtesy of Stuart Miles | FreeDigitalPhotos.net.