



WBA

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Our purpose is to promote the leadership, advancement and interests of women attorneys through professional education, networking and the exchange of ideas between our members, local bar associations, business and the community.

Leadership Initiatives for Your Firm



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As a business consultant and executive coach, I read all the time about the importance of leadership--from books correlating leadership to corporate success, to white papers on applied leadership, and of course the autobiographies of CEOs. It is no wonder so many attorneys are interested in participating in myriad leadership development opportunities and growing side-by-side with their corporate counterparts as well as the clients they serve.

So why are many law firms hard pressed to invest in leadership initiatives? Well, some managing partners offered that after hiring the best law graduates from the best schools they

expect that leadership can be figured out on the job. Others explained that leadership is not a requirement for success, rather the ability to bill and develop business is the single most important skill. Still others commented that they do have a leadership program, but that they have not seen a whole lot of value from it. The story that prompted this article was hearing this: A newly appointed partner was asked to design a leadership program for her firm. She approached this request with excitement. Only after presenting four pages of ideas and options did she learn that the executive council was just looking for a few courses to send a select group to. Yikes! How did we get so far off course on this one?

The core issues seem to be the gap between what attorneys need in the way of leadership development and the perceived absence of it in their firms. The critical leadership needs for senior associates and new partners involve shifting from a focus on technical expertise to entrepreneurial skills for more robust business development. For new associates it involves looking up in the firm for examples of great leadership to model themselves after, for a sense of inspiration, and the kind of attention and feedback that builds confidence and courage. Finally senior partners and chairs need to be practicing great leadership, modeling those critical attributes and developing successors.

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