

## The Law Firm of the Future: Part II

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Get your hands dirty and become tomorrow's law firm today. Are you ready? *Really* ready?

The first step is to ask yourself if you want to lead or follow. Leaders: read on. Followers: wait and see what the leaders do (but can you afford to wait?).

The law firm of the future (as described in Part I that appeared in the April 2008 issue of *Lexpert*<sup>®</sup>) is based on a client-centric business model. You all serve your clients well, so what does that really mean? It means helping your lawyers think like business people. Build and lead their practices like businesses. It's that simple. How will that happen? When they change the way they think about their role in the firm and when your leaders do the same. Why would they want to do that? Because they believe in, and buy into the fact, that there's a better way to get what they want. The key here, the golden ticket, the magic bullet, is buy-in. It's what makes or breaks a change effort.

Make it happen with these steps to becoming the law firm of the future:

1. **Blessings from above** - Get your managing partner onside to the concept of the law firm of the future. This is where you start if you really want to tackle the "big picture." If it's not possible at this stage, continue as follows and revisit this later when you have results to prove it's the right way to go.
2. **Start with a strategic plan for the firm** - Fully understand the needs of your clients. Clearly identify what you want your firm to be in the eyes of your clients. Engage key internal stakeholders in the planning process; engage outside professionals where necessary (know when you're going to need help).

3. **Conduct a gap analysis** - Identify gaps between where you are now and where you want to be. Identify what it will take to get to where you want to be. Gaps will likely illuminate themselves in the areas of people, infrastructure, and systems. A gap analysis also helps you identify where the hurdles are going to occur and what you can do to proactively address them.
4. **Create an action plan** - Start with the most pressing needs identified in the gap analysis. Where is the greatest pain? List all of the items that need to occur. Be very specific and drill down as deep as you can.
5. **Identify early adopters** - Know your lawyers and find early adapters. Find those who are already thinking that things have to change. Find those who "get it" when you share your vision. Confirm their buy-in, alignment with and support of the firm's strategic plan. Find out what they want/need to be the "lawyer of the future"

***Ensure that every person, from your mailroom to your CEO, understands their role in service to the client and how it impacts the law firm of the future.***



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in the law firm of the future.

6. **Plant seeds of change with pilot programs** - Start small with a pilot program to address one of the areas you identified as having the greatest need for change and/or the area(s) your early adopters have identified for themselves. Our experience suggests starting with business development training. It's easy to measure results and when effectively provided, produces quick tangible financial results for the firm. The bonus? It helps your lawyers see their practices as client-centric businesses. It forces your firm to re-think its overall strategic direction (i.e., think like a client-centric business).
7. **Measure success** - Keep track of all tangible (financial) and intangible (behavioural) changes. Measure these against previous results (if applicable).
8. **Confirm buy-in with leaders (managing partners and committees)** - If you were not able to have your managing partner on board from the start, use the results you've been able to produce with the pilot(s) and engage (or re-engage) with them at this point. Have your managing partner take the vision to your governing body — they must lead this change. Support your leaders. Provide them with skills training so they can stay ahead of the curve of change and lead by example (help show them how to lead "the new way").
9. **Communicate success and value to the rest of the firm** - Let the rest of your firm know what you've been up to and what you've been able to achieve for the firm. Articulate your vision of the future and each individual's role in that future. Ensure that every person; staff and lawyers, from your mailroom to your CEO, understands their role in service to the client and how it impacts the law firm of the future.
10. **Identify leaders from the first round and groom them** - Leaders will emerge from the first pilot. So provide them with the tools and teach them the skills they individually need to lead the next group through the process (groom your future

leaders to lead). This is where your succession plan starts to develop.

11. **Start the cycle again with your next group of early adopters** - Have your new leaders help you identify who's ready to receive the next wave of training. Start the next pilot, track and communicate results.
12. **Change policies to reward new behaviour** - You can expect at some point throughout all of this, that some of your firm's existing policies will be called into question. It will be obvious that they will no longer serve the new direction you are trying to take or the new behaviour(s) you are trying to reinforce. You will have to review the policies that no longer work and update them to reflect this new direction and behaviour.

Psst! Don't try and become the law firm of the future by starting with policy changes (the historical law firm change management approach), you will fail.
13. **With role models and policies in place, invest in your junior talent** - Why has investing in junior talent been such a gamble? Because you didn't have the platform to create a place where they want to stay! So when you have role models in place, leaders who junior associates can look up to and see themselves in, it's a safer investment developing your junior talent.

Where are you now? Join the dialogue at [www.thelawfirmofthefuture.com](http://www.thelawfirmofthefuture.com).

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