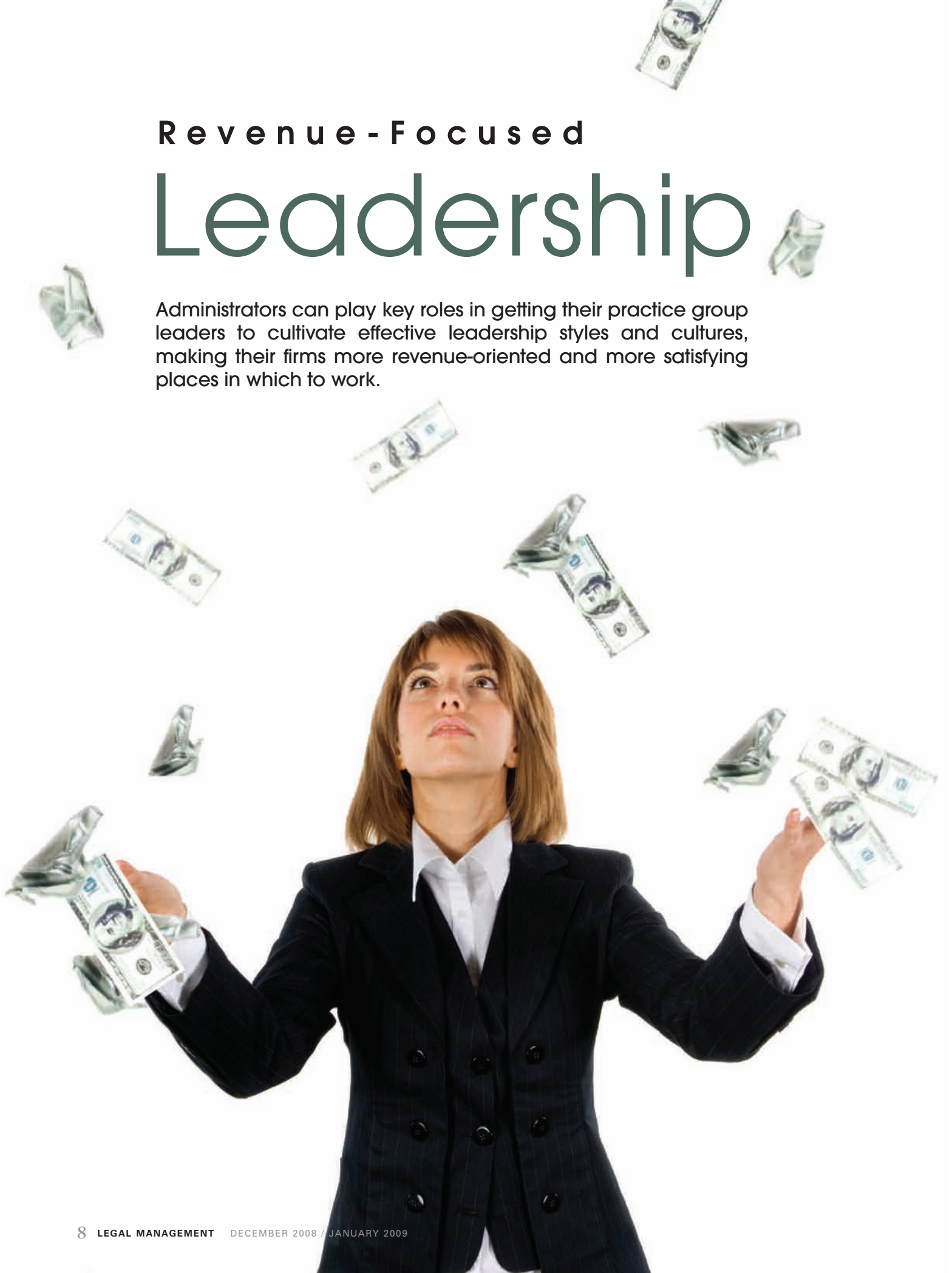


Revenue - Focused

Leadership

Administrators can play key roles in getting their practice group leaders to cultivate effective leadership styles and cultures, making their firms more revenue-oriented and more satisfying places in which to work.



No one needs to tell you work today is not business as usual. Behaviors that previously worked for many lawyers and other legal professionals will not fly in today's market. Laissez-faire attitudes toward leadership will no longer be enough. It's time to amp it up by getting your group leaders to take the reins and guide the herd in a different direction.

Your lawyer-leaders can have an extraordinary impact on the revenue generated by those they lead. This article will arm you with ideas and approaches to present to your group leaders that can help them better manage the business development efforts in their groups.

This model comprises two major elements: the "How" and the "What" of leadership. The "How" presents six major leadership styles and shows how they impact performance and the overall work environment. The "What" identifies four major components of running a group that will result in better planning, a healthier culture, improved implementation, and yield more effective communication.

THE "HOW" OF LEADERSHIP

The best approach I have seen for the "How" of leadership is contained in the book *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, wherein the authors (Daniel Goleman, Annie McKee, and Richard E. Boyatzis) describe six major leadership styles that can drive, or dilute, performance. Effective leaders blend many, if not all, of these styles depending on the situation and their self-awareness. Giving these challenging times, our leaders may need to emphasize some approaches over others.

Visionary Style

For many lawyers, the present is a scary place. Leaders need to get these lawyers to look toward the future, envision a desired set of outcomes, and agree upon action steps that will get them there. An example of the success of this style comes from a Northeastern U.S. firm that had a practice that had slowed. The group leader engaged in a planning process that got the group to focus on the future by identifying issues that would be important to clients one to two years down the road. They uncovered five areas, developed action plans for promoting those areas, built approach teams, met with clients, and got new work.

Coaching Style

This style has been shown to generate the highest levels of performance in others. It is an especially useful tool for leaders who have lawyers facing atypical market conditions. One major challenge of coaching is the time commitment. Leaders of large groups rarely have time to coach each lawyer who needs the help. They also may not have the talent or the personality. One firm's solution was to develop a mentoring process in which senior lawyers with skill and passion were assigned to help others create – and, more importantly, implement – business development plans. Some firms farm this role out to outside professionals, while others have developed brainstorming groups of like-minded attorneys who meet regularly to help each other develop plans, problem-solve, and stay accountable for acting on their plans.

Affiliative Style

This style involves caring about others and understanding their human sides. Especially in tough times, it is important to enhance loyalty, teamwork, and camaraderie. If needed, encourage your leaders to get their groups together outside of the work environment. Have them engage in activities with complementary practice groups. Some groups ask clients how they can participate in clients' community activities. With some thought, your leaders can come up with other creative ways to connect their lawyers with each other and their clients.

Democratic Style

Law firms are filled with this style, though often to our detriment. The danger of too much democracy is that it can result in a long decision-making cycle (the analysis-paralysis trap). Another breakdown is the compromise that can result from too many people involved in a process, often resulting in a watered down and ultimately ineffective solution.

Pacesetting Style

This approach can work, but it must be used judiciously. It is a default style for many high-achieving leaders who expect much from themselves and from others. In this model, leaders ask their people to work faster and smarter. Those using this style must proceed with caution. When used too much, or when



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leaders push too hard, it can result in burnout and complaints about micromanagement.

An example of how this style was used effectively was in an office of a mid-sized firm that decided it wanted to accelerate activity on seven major initiatives. The firm created a 90-day window, selected a leader to manage the entire process as well as leaders for each initiative, made people accountable, and had frequent check-in, with some leaders meeting several times a week. The result: completion of important tasks that had been languishing for years.

Commanding Style

In *Primal Leadership*, the authors warn that this style is the most ineffective of the six, and those that use it often deliver the worst performance. When overused, this “I’ll tell you what to do” style can demoralize people and decrease their commitment toward their work and achieving group goals. There are, however, times when this is both effective and necessary. When we need quick solutions during a crisis, the back-and-forth nature of the democratic style may not work. When tough decisions need to be made, the commanding style can break a deadlock and get things moving forward.

THE “WHAT” OF LEADERSHIP

Now that we have discussed style, it’s time to focus on substance. The following are four major areas that revenue-focused leaders effectively manage to get superior performance from their groups.

Planning

Planning is always important, and doubly so in times of change. Groups need to agree on where they are going and pool their resources in ways that give them the best chances of making big impacts with limited time and resources. Individuals need to understand their roles in a group plan while blending the “good of the team” with the good of themselves.

This is a fine line for leaders to walk. If group plans are not in alignment with individual needs and

goals, leaders will not get the level of commitment they need to succeed. Leaders must also provide extra help to lawyers who need to retool their practices or their business development approaches in this new economy. This is a good time to utilize the coaching style to get them the help they need.

There are many ways to build an effective business development plan. In some groups, the leader builds it alone or hires a consultant. Other groups create task forces, while others go on retreats and get their entire groups involved in crafting the plans. Whatever your method, at some point you should include as many in the group as possible in order to maximize idea generation and eventual buy-in.

Breakdowns in planning often occur when plans are not translated into action. Leaders must turn vision and strategy into tactics. Make sure your plans are complete with specific action steps, timelines, personal accountability, and measures.

Culture

What are your leaders doing to create an environment where people can grow, thrive, and give their best efforts? Managing the group’s culture is often not on the radar for our leaders. It may be seen as too touchy-feely, it may not be a priority, or there may be absolutely no awareness of its underlying importance.

Make no mistake – culture is the glue that holds groups together. We’ve all heard the truism that people join a company but leave a boss. While great group leaders can inspire others to reach higher and elevate their performance, poor leaders can cause people to withdraw, underperform, poison the environment, or depart.

To assess the culture in a group, ask your leaders to honestly answer some of the following questions. Is there a strong degree of trust within and between practice groups? Do group members give work to others willingly and proactively? Do they operate well as a team, share responsibilities, and work together to achieve group goals? Do people know each other personally, get together

socially, and do they know the scope of each other's practices? Do people treat other lawyers' clients as well as their own? Do they adhere to group standards? Do they possess an ownership mentality by taking personal responsibility for the group's success? Do they enjoy coming to work?

To influence a culture, we must first understand that many cultures exist by default. Each group is a microclimate that often operates based on legacy habits and dominant personalities. You can help your leaders by identifying patterns of behavior, building on the valuable ones, and changing those that are unproductive.

Communication

Revenue-focused leaders realize they must keep business development top-of-mind, both internally and externally. They must constantly keep the group's brand in front of clients, prospects, and referral sources. They must regularly keep goals, plans, and action steps in front of their groups in as many

ways as possible. Successful techniques have included recognition of top performers, conducting marketing-focused retreats, making client development the first agenda item in group meetings, and sending personal reminders to group members asking for updates. One firm had a "trade show" at its firm retreat during which each group presented its plans, success stories, and promotional materials to others in the firm.

Implementation

Ultimately, it all comes down to implementation. Leadership styles, plans, culture, and communication are all tools for getting the right things done.

Recognizing that certain outcomes may take years to achieve, we need approaches that will keep initiatives top-of-mind and sustainable. Effective leaders take long-term goals and break them down into shorter-term action steps. They develop interim measures that will demonstrate progress toward the eventual goals. From a business development

perspective, measures such as delivering exceptional client service, conducting on-site visits, communicating to the groups' contacts, providing training for clients, and scheduling sales meetings can be mile markers to measure progress.

A SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE

Ongoing revenue generation is the lifeblood of a successful practice. Particularly during challenging times, leaders must create a compelling vision, change behaviors, provide discipline, and sustain motivation. They need their group members delivering exceptional levels of client service, cross-selling, building teams, and developing great relationships in the marketplace. *

about the author

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