

10 Leadership Skills for Lawyers to Excel in 2022

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Running a law firm is rewarding but presents many challenges for managing partners. Leaders must manage not only the business aspects of running a law firm but tend to their duties in practicing law. Law firms run the best with leadership that is adaptive and responsive to the current workplace climate. In 2022, effective leadership skills for lawyers will be imperative to managing their firm, retaining employees, and meeting the expectations of the growing generation of new lawyers.

Whether you're taking on a new leadership role in the coming year or looking to enhance your law firm's work environment, here are 10 traits every lawyer should practice for a successful 2022.

1. Effective Communicaton
2. Integrity
3. Collaboration
4. Judgement
5. Creativity
6. Assertiveness and Confidence
7. Attention to Detail
8. Client Focus
9. Coaching and Development
0. Open to Change

Effective Communication

Communication is vital to any business environment and especially so when it comes to leadership skills for lawyers. In a law firm, leaders must maintain relationships and open communication with lawyers, legal support staff, clients, and stakeholders.

In addition to communicating clearly and effectively, communication needs to be authentic and appropriate for the audience. Excessive legalese or jargon may be off-putting or condescending to clients or support

staff that aren't familiar. Leaders must also listen well and take the thoughts and feedback of others into consideration.

Integrity

Leaders have morals and ethics in all situations, even if no one knows how they handle a situation. For some, integrity is considered the most valuable skill for leaders, since people are unlikely to trust or follow a leader that displays a lack of integrity.

For lawyers specifically, integrity is of utmost importance. The industry is under scrutiny to begin with, and a leader must demonstrate integrity at the firm and in the public eye to dispel any preconceived notions commonly assumed on lawyers. Clients who view a firm and its leaders as having integrity are more likely to choose and recommend them.

Collaboration

Leadership isn't about ruling over others – it's about taking the contributions of the team and directing them toward a common goal. For this reason, collaboration is one of the most important leadership traits.

Leaders need to listen and consider the other members of the firm to make sure everyone's strengths are utilized appropriately and everyone is on the same page. Additionally, collaboration allows for different views and ideas to be highlighted which naturally creates a space for diversity and inclusion.

Judgment

Often, lawyers are required to think critically about obstacles, challenges, and problems to determine valid solutions and plan a strategy to overcome them. Of course, a leader can't be focused only on themselves. Their decisions impact the entire firm and all its staff, so they can't be rash in their approach to problems. While there will always be shifts in the market or culture that force a leader to think on their feet, a good leader can weigh all the options and make the best decision for everyone involved.

Creativity

Creativity may not be the first trait that comes to mind for a leader, but it's vital to successful leadership. Much like judgment, creativity is necessary for effective problem-solving and decision-making. Complex problems need creative solutions, and a leader who can think outside the box can exercise innovative thought to navigate the challenges that come up.

Creative leaders also have the ability to inspire others and bring out the best in them, which improves productivity for everyone. If team members are struggling with a problem, an effective leader can help them see it from a new perspective and find a favorable solution.

Assertiveness and Confidence

Both assertiveness and confidence are necessary for leaders to move team members toward a common goal. If a leader isn't assertive enough or isn't confident in their decisions or insights, the team is less likely to trust them and put forth their best effort. Too assertive and a leader risks alienating staff and coming off as too bossy or superior.

Successful leaders have the ideal balance of assertiveness and confidence in their style, insights, and ideas, but not so much that they can't hear the opinions and ideas of others.

Attention to Detail

A leader with attention to detail considers all aspects of a situation. They're thorough in assessing and accomplishing tasks, no matter how small. These leaders are excellent at organizing and allocating time and resources, and thoroughly check all the details or information and plans.

However, it's possible to be *too* detail-oriented. When people focus too much on details, it's easy to miss the big picture and possible solutions. Leaders with attention to detail can find the ideal balance between the details and the larger organizational goals and objectives.

Client Focus

All business is about the customer, whether it's a retailer, a B2B service provider, or a law firm. Effective law firm leaders must have a focus on the client and put effort into satisfying the client's needs. This means that leaders need to understand what the clients want and need from the firm, how well those wants and needs are currently met, and what can be done to improve the experience.

From there, the leader can give team members and staff guidance and insights to ensure client expectations are met. This not only helps the firm with profits but improves the firm's reputation.

Coaching and Development

New law graduates and associates expect a law firm environment that will mentor them and provide ongoing development in their professional careers. Leaders should be effective at recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of their staff and helping them advance personal and professional growth.

A law firm can't underestimate the value of cultivating skills in young and eager lawyers. Effective coaching and leadership not only creates better lawyers and team members for the future but ensures that the whole firm is invested in the overall vision and business strategy.

Open to Change

Agile leaders are an asset in the rapidly shifting business world, even for law firms. Though, traditional law firms aren't immune to major shifts that change the way business gets done. Leaders need to be open to change and new processes to improve their business.

Trends in client care, legal technology, and digital communication push firms to adopt more digital and cloud-based solutions, and a leader that's unwilling to "get with the times" can find themselves and the firm left behind. A good leader sees the big picture and direction for the future, then finds areas for growth and development.

Outlook on Leadership Skills for Lawyers

While some of the traits of successful leadership are informed by the rapid shifts in the way people do business, many vital leadership skills are timeless. Leadership skills for lawyers like collaboration, communication, assertiveness, and creativity position law firms and their teams for success.

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