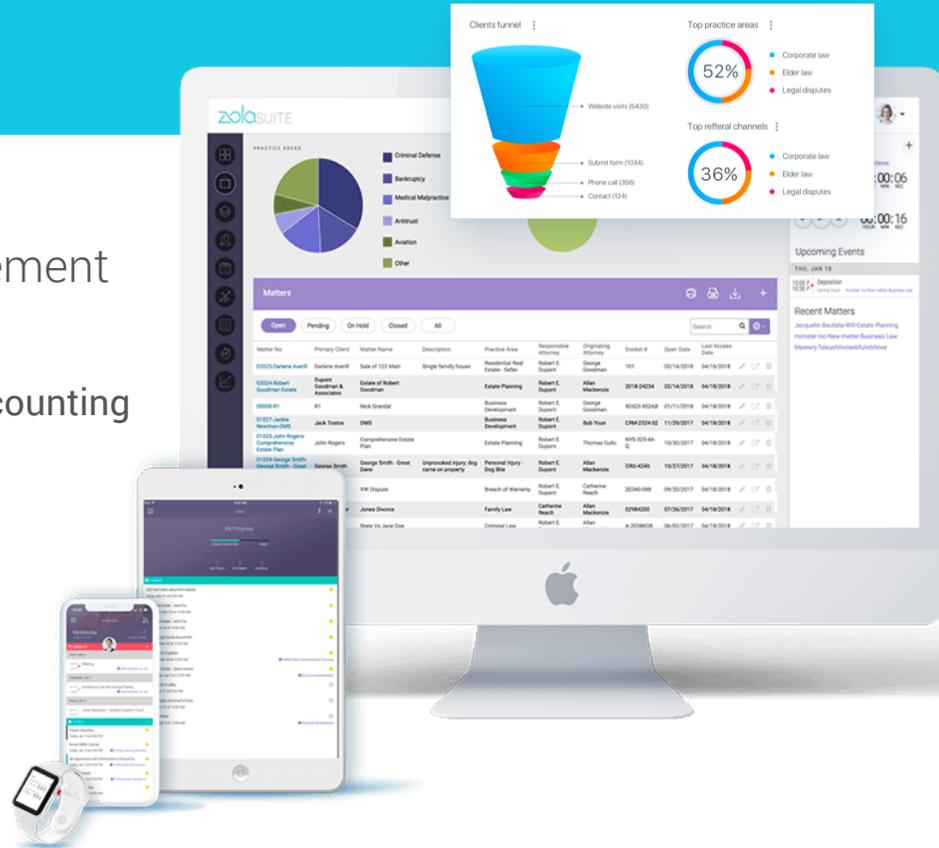


You've dreamt of the perfect practice management platform.

We've built it.

Cloud-based practice management software for the modern firm

- Robust time, billing & complete accounting
- Advanced reporting
- Smart email management
- Cutting edge iOS & Android apps



We are a mid-sized firm and Zola definitely helped us grow. It's a fantastic cloud-based solution for a firm with multiple locations and attorneys that need to collaborate on a single platform.

~ Dunlap, Bennett & Ludwig PLLC 100+ Users

Zola has a dedicated team that ensures a streamlined and highly accurate migration process for a hassle-free transition from a wide range of cloud and legacy applications, including:



PROLAW



zolasuite.com/ala • 855-997-1574

zolaSUITE
the power of ONE



A Lesson in Leadership for Legal Management Professionals

Extraordinary things can happen when legal managers increase self-awareness by seeking feedback.



NATALIE LOEB (left)
Founder and CEO, Loeb Leadership

SARAH JANOSIK, LCSW
Founder, Cowgirl Ventures

COURSE DESCRIPTION

More than ever, today's legal management professionals are expected to have leadership capabilities. Deciding on which skills and behaviors to build into each firm's environment can only be truly effective if the leader is willing to seek feedback about their own strengths and weaknesses from those they serve. The downside of this practice is that it can sting. The upside is that the legal manager is modeling a very powerful leadership behavior that will have long-term benefits to both themselves and the firm.

This CE course will encourage the reader to consider modeling the foundational practice of leadership development, thereby increasing self-awareness through seeking feedback. It will challenge the reader to push themselves outside their comfort zone and consider an action plan to increase self-awareness, seek feedback and commit to applying new learnings.

1. Recognize the fundamentals of leadership development.
2. Discover how proper leadership skills can affect the long-term strength of your firm.

3. Summarize the role self-awareness plays in leadership strength.
4. Describe techniques for soliciting feedback.
5. Identify the most effective ways to demonstrate leadership strength.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

It should be no surprise to any reader that today's law firms are being run like businesses because, in fact, they are businesses. Law firms provide a service to their clients, and to do this, they must hire great lawyers to do great lawyering. They also need high-performing business services staff to be sure the infrastructure supports the lawyers in such a way that the lawyers can spend their time building relationships with clients, earning more business and providing excellent legal services.

For lawyers to be 100% focused on their work, the business services team needs to be 100% focused on supporting the legal services being developed and delivered to clients. They must operate as a highly functional and cohesive work team. This doesn't happen magically. It requires solid, effective leadership from the legal management professionals.

One question legal management professionals often ask is, "What's changed — what do I need to know today that I may not have learned yesterday? I've been in a leadership role for over a decade (or two) and I've made it this far. What is there to learn?"

There are two answers. The first answer is "nothing," because for some law firms, little or nothing has changed internally. The second answer is "everything," because some firms are embracing change initiated by external factors more quickly. It will be no surprise to any reader of this CE course that many law firms are slow to change. Firms are filled with brilliant but risk-averse people; as a result, internal change happens slowly.

Outside of law firms, change is happening rapidly. In fact, the description for change often used today is the acronym VUCA: "Coined in the late 1990s, the military-derived acronym stands for the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity — terms that reflect an increasingly unstable and rapidly changing business world. This new VUCA environment will require HR and talent management professionals to change the focus and methods of leadership development."¹

1 Hour

CLM® Recertification Credit: 1 hour in the subject area of Communications and Organizational Management (CM).

CLE: 1 hour participatory MCLE credit, including the following subfield credits: 1 hour of Participatory Credit.

SHRM: This program has been pre-approved for SHRM for 1 PDC for the SHRM-CP or SHRM-SCP.

HRCI: This activity has been approved for 1 HR (General) recertification credit hour towards California, GPHR, PHRI, SPHRi, PHR and SPHR recertification through the HR Certification Institute.

This VUCA environment has caught many law firm leaders off-guard — and it's human nature to protect oneself against threats. As a result, the "stick your head in the sand and wait until it passes" approach has been a leadership strategy for many law firm leaders for years. While this approach may have been successful in the past, today it puts leaders and the firm at a disadvantage. Too much is changing externally, and leaders need to have the courage to look within and around in order to add value in their roles at today's law firms.

Fortunately, the field of leadership development is keeping pace with the VUCA environment. In fact, Bob Johansen, Distinguished Fellow at the Institute for the Future and the author of *Leaders Make the Future: Ten New Leadership Skills for an Uncertain World*, proposes that the best VUCA leaders are characterized by vision, understanding, clarity and agility — the "flips" to the VUCA model.¹

Contemporary lawyers are also experiencing VUCA. They are being asked to guide and execute for their clients in a landscape that is changing every day. They are experiencing new technology and having to adopt new ways of working with Millennial associates. The practice of law is different today than it was in the past, which is affecting the health and well-being of our lawyers and those around them. This is all the more reason that administrative leaders of today's firms must be at their best and continuously add value to their firms.

In his book *Leadershift*, John C. Maxwell describes 11 shifts that today's leaders need to be successful. Maxwell recognizes that change is so rapid that more is needed today than in the past to lead successfully. Each shift sets the

leader up for new and exciting possibilities, strengthening their leadership abilities.

As with all leadership success, the first shift required is a mindset shift.² Maxwell describes this as when leaders are open to change and willing to look within and start asking themselves questions. Additionally, they have a willingness to look up and around and become better listeners and observers. Maxwell also challenges leaders to think about to what extent they are willing to rely more on their intuition and creativity rather than just facts. Leadershifting requires leaders to let go of some old habits and be dedicated to building new ones to become more effective leaders.

As more and more lawyers are expecting their administrative leaders to look up and around to see what is on the horizon, they recognize they can't lead their firms into the future on their own. They need to have administrative leaders with courage, resilience, foresight and self-awareness to help drive the firm forward. For this reason, our administrative leaders must be introspective, continuously seek feedback, consider how that feedback can be helpful and use it to strengthen their leadership performance.

BEING AN EXEMPLARY LEADER STARTS WITH SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the foundation of leadership development. In Daniel Goleman's article "What Makes a Leader?"³ he stunned the business world by providing research stating "that the most effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: They all have a high degree of what has come to be known as *emotional intelligence*."

Emotional intelligence was coined by researchers Peter Salovey and John Mayer. In practical terms, emotional intelligence combines the awareness that emotions can drive our behavior and impact people (positively and negatively) and the need to learn how to manage those emotions — both our own and others' — especially when we are under pressure.

In the article, Goleman states: "It's not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant; they do matter, but mainly as 'threshold capabilities;' that is, they are the entry-level requirements for executive positions. But my research, along with other studies, clearly shows that emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive analytical mind, and an

endless supply of smart ideas, but he or she still won't make a great leader."³

Goleman goes on to explain that self-awareness is the first component of emotional intelligence. In Goleman's terms, self-awareness means having a deep understanding of one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs and drives. People with strong self-awareness are neither overly critical nor unrealistically hopeful. Rather, they are honest — with themselves and others.

ENHANCED SELF-AWARENESS REQUIRES SEEKING FEEDBACK

I have often heard from partners, chief executive officers and administrative leaders, "Why do I want to know what others think of me?" For some, the idea of seeking feedback is just too overwhelming. To some, seeking feedback means something must be wrong or broken with them.

But in the field of leadership development, seeking feedback is exactly the opposite. It is a sign of strength with a demonstrated desire to perform at one's best. Nothing is broken. In fact, the leader is modeling a powerful leadership behavior — it shows others that in today's VUCA world, one can never know everything all the time; seeking feedback from trusted colleagues will help a leader shift in a way to perform at their best.

Seeking feedback helps leaders use time their wisely by focusing on developing the behaviors that will bring the most value to them and the firm. Feedback provides the data for how leaders can perform at their best. By drawing on that feedback, leaders can choose new behaviors, habits or competencies to focus on. Working on those new behaviors provides continuous challenge, growth and satisfaction for the leader.

HOW TO SEEK FEEDBACK

In Joseph R. Folkman's classic book, *The Power of Feedback: 35 Principles for Turning Feedback from Others into Personal and Professional Change*, he suggests that those who look for and accept feedback position themselves to be more competent and capable. However, in an assessment looking at more than 1,000 managers, direct reports were asked if their managers actively looked for opportunities to get feedback. Only 16% of managers had consensus from their teams that they were "actively looking for feedback."

In their research study “Bringing the Rigor of Research to the Art of Leadership,” authors and leadership development thought leaders Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner provide the data to support the Five Exemplary Practices of Leadership® that they have identified as gamechangers for effective leadership:

1. Model the way.
2. Inspire a shared vision.
3. Challenge the process.
4. Enable others to act.
5. Encourage the heart.

Each of these five practices have six behaviors associated with them, and the research shows that if leaders do these behaviors more frequently, they will be more effective in their roles.

Under the Model the Way practice, one of the six behaviors centers around the question of how often leaders ask for feedback on how their actions affect other people’s performance. This behavior is intentionally placed under the Model the Way practice, confirming that this behavior is very powerful when leaders model it.

SEEKING FEEDBACK TAKES COURAGE AND ASSUMES RESILIENCE

Though not an exhaustive list, the following are some techniques to get you started on seeking feedback.

Find people you trust to help you. Identify a list of trusted colleagues and friends and ask for their insights on how they would describe you. Ask about how they would describe your strengths and what they notice about your behavior when you are under pressure. What behaviors do they notice that are helpful to them as they perform their duties? What behaviors or habits do you display that may get in the way? Be prepared to actively listen, suspend judgment and let them finish. Thank them for providing the feedback and let them know you will think about the feedback and what you can do with it.

Use a research-based assessment instrument. For example, a Myers-Briggs Type Instrument® (MBTI), Emotional Intelligence Assessment (EQi 2.0®), Leadership Profile Inventory® (LPI) or Everything DiSC® assessment will help leaders gain insight on how they are perceived by others. Look for research-based and statistically valid and reliable instruments. This will help leaders feel comfortable about the feedback the instrument is providing. Even with statistically valid and reliable instruments, the leader must be honest when completing the assessment to get an accurate picture of what their behaviors look like.

Consider a 360. The 360-degree feedback model is a process in which not just the boss but also peers, colleagues, direct reports and sometimes even clients provide feedback on the leader. Leaders receive an analysis of how others perceive their leadership skills, aptitude and behaviors. The purpose is to increase the leader’s self-awareness. These can be done using an online instrument or by an executive coach hired to meet personally with the leader’s chosen participants.

In Folkman’s book *The Power of Feedback*, he points out for the reader, “Asking others for input increases their expectations that you will change in a positive way.” Of course, it is then up to the leader to embrace the idea of changing behavior based on the feedback, or the 360 process will have been for nothing and will only frustrate the leader and the participants. As Folkman says, “The quality of the feedback isn’t the problem; it’s what we do with it that counts.”

Try experiential learning. In the article “Experiential Learning: Past and Present,” authors Linda H. Lewis and Carol J. Williams defined this concept as “learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking.”

There are characteristics that should be present in order to define an activity or method as experiential. These include providing exercises that assist participants to become self-aware and an opportunity to receive feedback in a nonthreatening manner.⁴

Combining the aforementioned elements in leadership training can enhance learning by providing the somatic and behavioral exercises that increase a person’s confidence.

AN ONGOING COMMITMENT

As mentioned earlier in this article, increasing self-awareness by seeking feedback is a powerful way of demonstrating leadership strength. However, seeking an assessment is the first step. Holding yourself accountable for synthesizing what you hear and learn, pulling out what is useful, thanking those who gave it to you, asking to be held accountable and building the new behavior takes work and commitment.

Throughout our years working with leaders in law firms, we have seen significant growth and change in leaders’ ability to be effective and create highly functional teams. Those



leaders have always made a commitment to being the best leader they can be.

It is an intentional choice to be a leader — if you take the position to lead at a law firm, it is now up to you to choose to be a leader. If you choose to be a leader, you must be willing to increase your self-awareness. This is not a one-and-done effort. Due to today's VUCA environment, we must be committed to internalizing seeking feedback on an ongoing basis. It takes courage and resilience to bounce back up when we hear something that knocks us down a bit.

Our lawyers need, want and deserve exemplary leaders. Go out and find out how you can be the best leader you can be. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Natalie Loeb is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Loeb Leadership and is a sought-after thought leader with over 20 years of experience. Specializing in executive coaching, Loeb has helped dozens of senior leaders develop new skills, inspire colleagues and optimize overall performance. Her expertise informed the creation of the successful Managing for Impact training program for legal managers.

 natalie@loebleadership.com

 linkedin.com/in/natalieloeb

 loebleadership.com

 732-714-4046

Sarah Janosik, LCSW, is the Founder of Cowgirl Ventures and the Co-Founder of Relate Center, a professional therapy practice that focuses on mind, body, and emotional connection as a vehicle for change, resolving issues, and leading a more satisfying life. Janosik also conducts business and professional workshops focusing on teamwork and professional development. She facilitates both students, professionals and business teams increasing their knowledge of their unique ability, recognizing how others differ, and communicating effectively with others.

 sarah@relatecenter.com

 cowgirlventures.com

 512-327-3723

REFERENCES

1. Lawrence, Kirk: "Developing Leaders in a VUCA Environment." UNC/Kenan-Flagler Business School, 2013.
2. Maxwell, John C.: *Leadershift: The 11 Essential Changes Every Leader Must Embrace*. Harper Collins Leadership, 2019.
3. Goleman, Daniel: "What Makes a Great Leader?" *Harvard Business Review*, January 2004.
4. Chapman, S., McPhee, P. & Proudman, B. (1995). "What is Experiential Education?". In Warren, K. (Ed.), *The Theory of Experiential Education* (pp. 235-248). Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

EARN YOUR CE CREDIT

Now that you've read the course, take the exam to earn your CE credit. Please use the information below to register for the exam. A confirmation email will be sent to you with additional details. Please check your junk/spam folder, as it may be filtered there. To register, please visit <http://bit.ly/2GdZgmJ>. Members pay \$49; nonmembers pay \$69. Once you have registered, please visit alanet.org/elearning to access the exam. If you have any questions, please email us at elearning@alanet.org.