



BOOK REVIEW

The Business of Law: Strategies for Success
Consulting Editor: The International Bar Association
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Being a good lawyer is not the same as knowing how to run a successful law firm. Most lawyers set out on their careers wanting to practise law, not to manage a business with all the unpredictability and strategic decision-making that management entails. Managing a law firm takes years of learning and experience and a willingness to focus on the business aspects, sometimes in preference to fee-earning activities. For most, a foray into management is a daunting prospect which, although potentially hugely rewarding in the long term, is a minefield at the outset.

The Business of Law: Strategies for Success, published in conjunction with the International Bar Association, gives a practical and varied insight into many vital aspects of managing a law firm in the 21st century. Drawn from the valuable experience of law firm managers, business consultants and bankers, the book includes, in easily short and digestible chapters, advice on how to succeed in a particular jurisdiction, the importance of having a clearly defined strategy, the roles of good governance and corporate social responsibility, the development of effective PR strategies and an explanation of useful financing techniques.

The Business of Law covers a wide range of topics written from a variety of different perspectives: the international law firm; the national law firm; the law school professor; the post-merger law firm; the law firm business consultant; the innovative law firm; the boutique law firm and the corporate banker. Each sets out their take on how to contribute to the growth and profitability of a law firm. The chapters are generally well thought out, clearly structured and sufficiently detailed.

Several key themes throughout the book struck us as applying across the board to law firms of all types.

- **A clear strategy is fundamental.** Equally relevant to a large

international firm, a firm that operates in just one jurisdiction or a tiny boutique, several chapters focus on the importance of first understanding from where the firm is starting, its strengths and weaknesses, culture and the nuances of the market in which it operates as fundamental to arriving at where the firm wants to go. The importance of always keeping in mind the core vision and strategy of the firm (for example, when making decisions about whether and how to grow and expand) is repeatedly emphasised.

- **Strong leadership and the flow of information.** The book examines the interplay between strategic leadership on the one hand and partner autonomy on the other in decision-making, developing the brand of the law firm and moving with the times. Chapters deal with the challenge of developing and maintaining a clear set of values and culture in a firm, especially on an international scale. The importance of providing regular and accurate financial information to assess firm performance against an agreed business plan and sharing results with partners and staff so individuals can be held accountable for their performance is highlighted.
- **Attracting, retaining and investing in key people.** Good people present at every level lead to a stable firm and brand value. Young lawyers need to be trained to become trusted advisers by being presented with good role models. Training lawyers to be commercially minded and to speak the language of their clients is even more significant in difficult economic times.
- **Issues to consider when deciding how to grow a firm.** There are various options for achieving growth, for example, by acquiring a team, undertaking a merger, expanding geographically or through price differentiation.
- **The importance of PR in a law firm.** A chapter explores how PR can work for a law firm in helping to promote and build the brand of the firm and develop a firm's market profile. Decisions have to be made on how law firms manage their PR and who should be responsible for the PR within a law firm.
- **Governance, CSR, diversity and the role of women.** It is clear that clients increasingly expect a law firm's priorities to be aligned with their own in terms of how work is delivered and how staff and partners interact with clients. The big issues include leadership, accountability, performance management and risk management as well as corporate social responsibility; all are integral to competing in the modern world. Understanding the fundamental part women can play in law firms and the steps law firms can take to achieve an environment that encourage women has become increasingly important.

The Business of Law is not based on academic principles or a magic formula

for success but rather (and this is where the real value is) years of experience from leaders of some of the world's most successful law firms. For anyone starting up a new practice, venturing onto the management side of law or simply interested in contributing more effectively to the growth of their own firm, *The Business of Law* is an invaluable and highly insightful guide.

Reviewed by Catriona Watt (Communications Officer, IBA Young Lawyers' Committee) and Ronnie Fox (immediate Past Chair, IBA Senior Lawyers' Committee), Fox, solicitors in the City of London.