

LAW FIRM LEADERSHIP SURVEY

AUGUST
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HELPING LAW FIRMS THRIVE



SUMMARY

This is a summary of a snapshot survey conducted in March-June 2023 to assess leadership practices and challenges in law firms globally.

The online survey aimed to identify the extent to which firms were effective at practising the four leadership principles outlined in my latest book, 'The Heart of Practice', namely:

1. Before you lead others, first learn to lead yourself (self leadership)
2. Always treat people as you would like to be treated (people leadership)
3. Run your firm as a business entity (business leadership), and
4. Contribute to helping solve some of the world's problems (community leadership).

There were 40 responses from representatives from firms in New Zealand (67.5%), Australia (17.5%), United Kingdom (10%), Canada and Sri Lanka. Responses came mostly from Managing Partners (37.5%), Equity Partners (25%) and Practice Managers (25%). The survey was brief, asking just nine questions of either a qualitative or quantitative nature. The replies to each of those questions are summarised in this report on the following pages. The main conclusions I draw from this survey are:

- leading transition and implementing change is still a major challenge for law firm leaders;
- firms appear ill-prepared for the future; the survey suggests many are not being driven sufficiently by a strategic agenda or a business manifesto; several respondents report 'identifying the next generation of leaders', 'succession', 'future viability' and 'lack of unity/ consensus' as being major challenges; some leaders struggle to get all their people 'on the same page';
- leaders identified their strengths, in the following order: self leadership (81%), people leadership (79%), business leadership (75%), and community leadership (69%);
- while firms are reasonably proactive in giving back to the community (76%), too few have any strategies for sustainable development (60%);
- few leaders are getting enough support from coaches, counsellors or mentors.

My thanks to all those who participated in this survey. I hope you find these results of value. Should you wish to receive a copy of the full survey, please contact me directly.

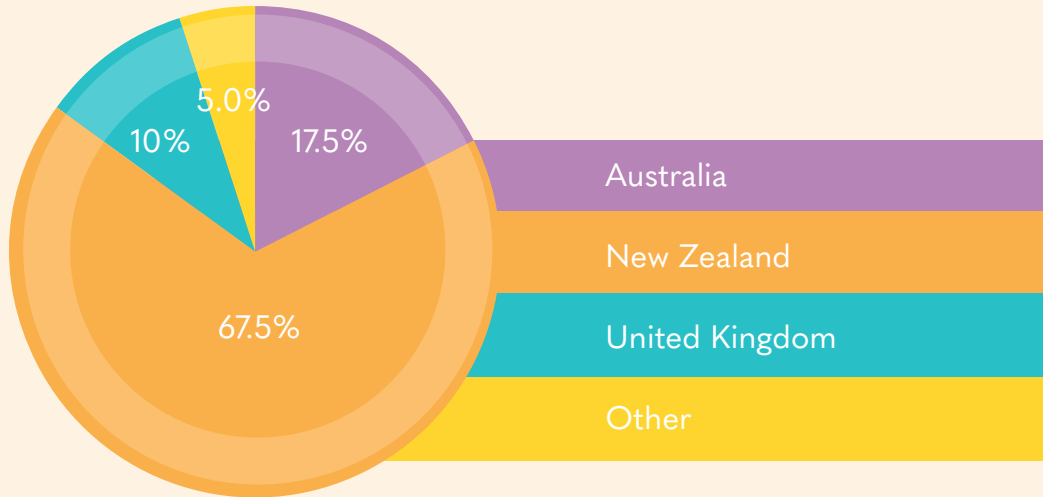
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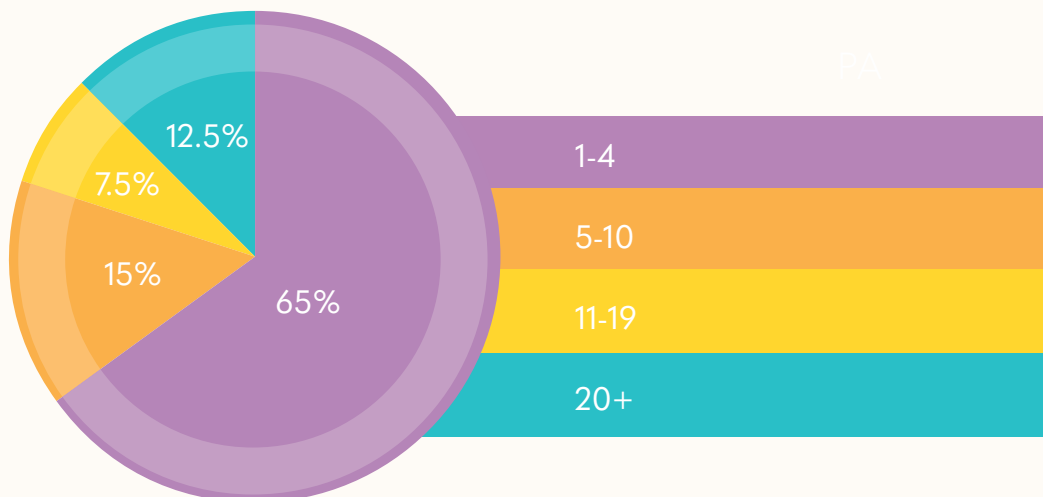
QUESTION 1

Where are you based?



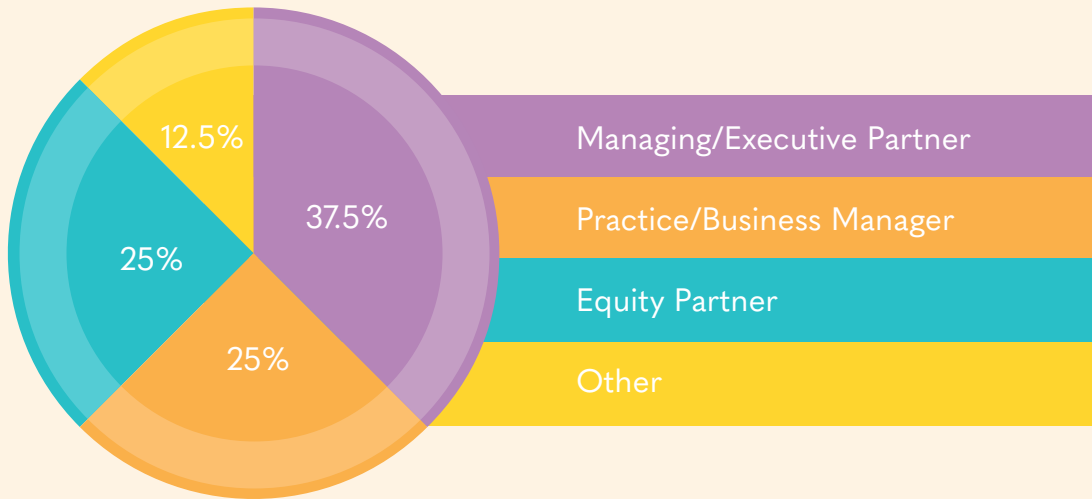
QUESTION 2

Please indicate the number of owners in your firm



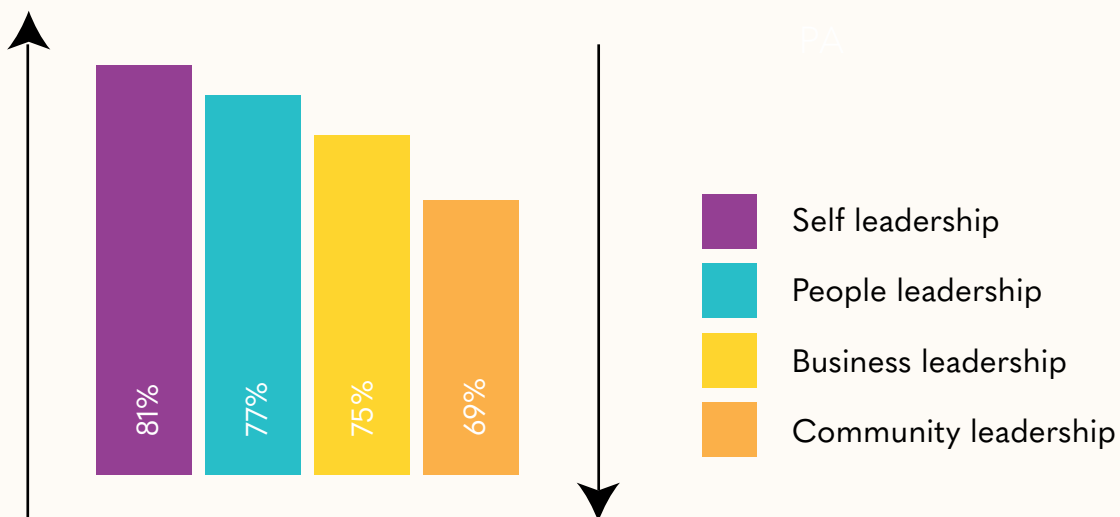
QUESTION 3

Please indicate your role



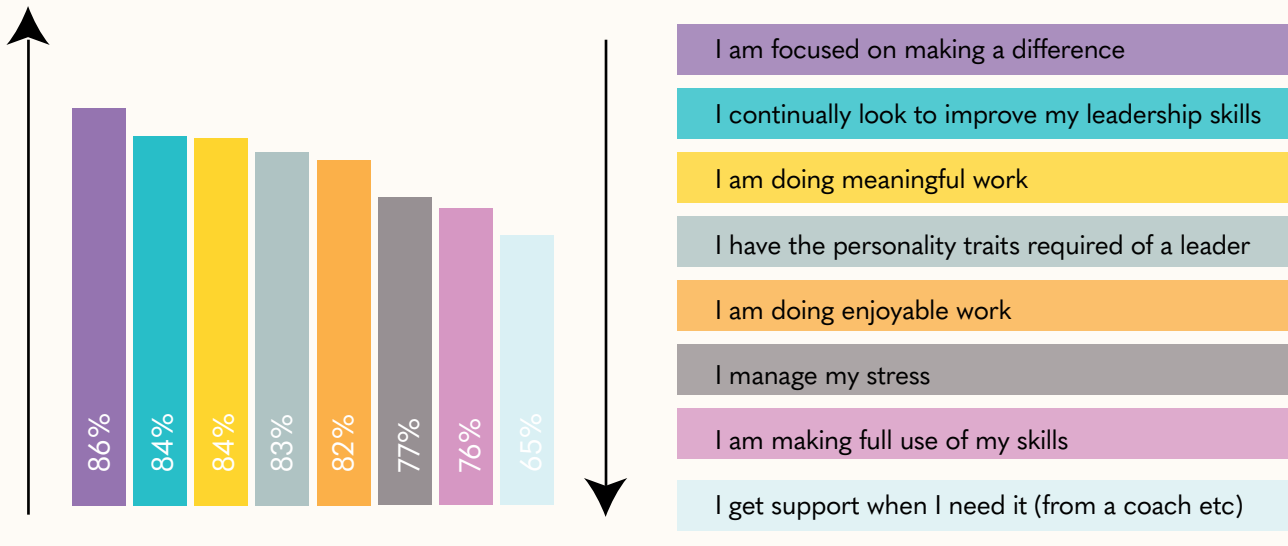
QUESTION 4

On a scale of 10% (poor) to 100% (excellent), please rate your (or your firm's) overall leadership effectiveness in the following areas.



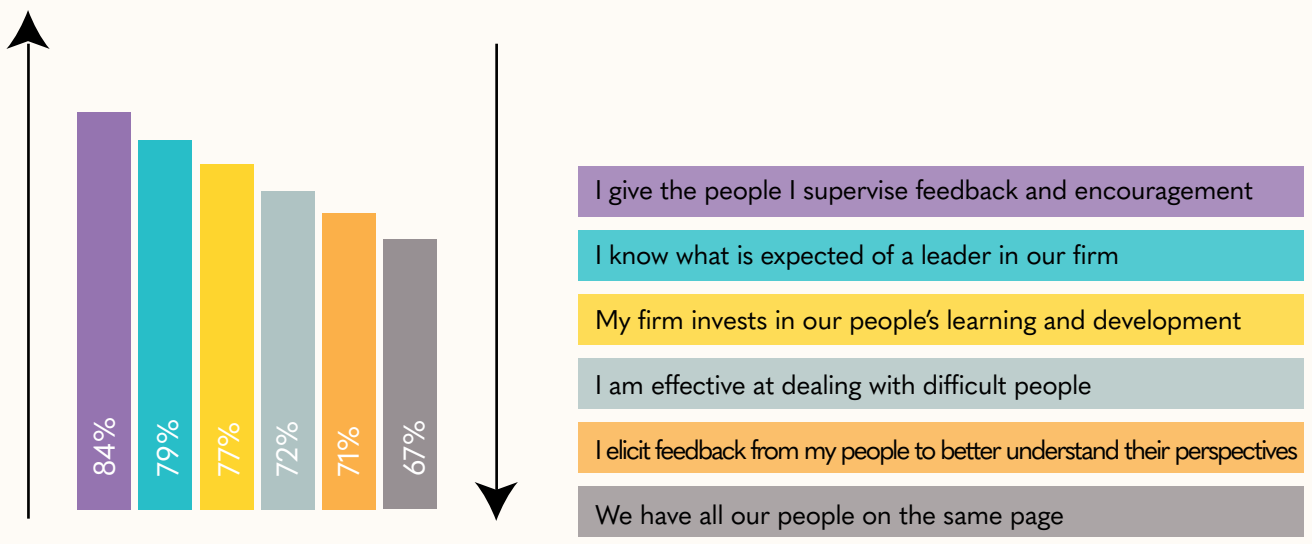
QUESTION 5

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (where 10% = strongly disagree, 100% = strongly agree).



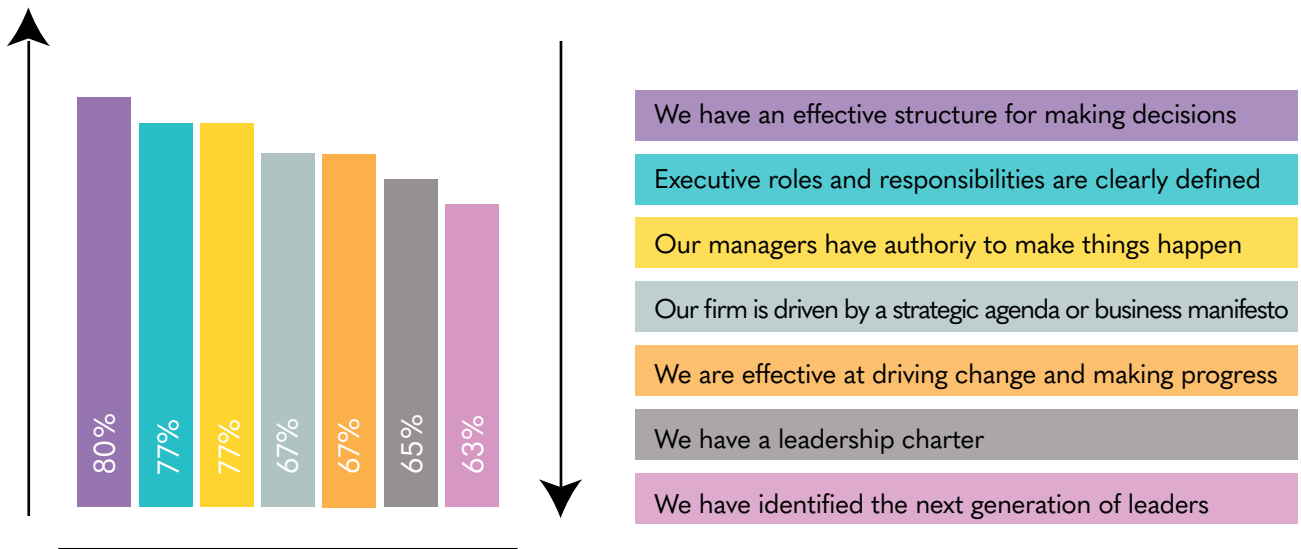
QUESTION 6

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (where 10% = strongly disagree, 100% = strongly agree).



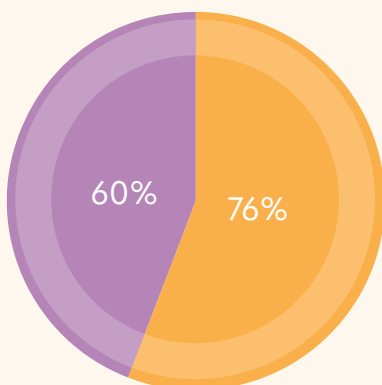
QUESTION 7

Please rate your firm's effectiveness in each area
(where 10% = not at all like us; 100% = exactly like us).



QUESTION 8

Please rate your firm's effectiveness in the following areas
(10% = poor; 100% = excellent).



We are proactive in giving back to our local community (e.g., volunteering, charity, pro bono)

We have strategies for sustainable development (e.g., energy efficiency, equality, diversity, access to justice)



QUESTION 9

In summary, how would you describe your biggest leadership challenge? (Random selection of comments.)

'Guiding the firm through a significant transition period following a failure to plan for succession.'

'We have no succession plan at all... it is hold on and hope a unicorn walks in the door to take over. We are not actively looking within to groom the next generation of leader...the firm will die unless we innovate.'

'Guiding the firm through a significant transition period following a failure to plan for succession. For us, this will require externally recruiting two senior lawyers who are ready for leadership roles.'

'Being unified as a leadership team, principled decision making instead of ad hoc decision-making, and following through on our decisions.'

'Governance divide between owners and management to ensure we run as an effective business.'

'Identifying our future state and taking steps to achieve that state.'

'People are our biggest challenge. Resilience was depleted through COVID and hasn't returned. We spend a lot of energy and resources on jollyng staff along and keeping them engaged. This can be exhausting. It is also hard balancing the hopes and dreams and demands of GenZ with running a sustainable business.'

'Finding new employees with the qualities required for up and coming leaders.'

'Change management in an ever changing environment.'

'Dealing with difficult people and situations within the team, particularly related to performance.'



Helping law firms *thrive*.

I offer board-level support to firms looking to *grow, develop and improve* their legal business.

Bringing ideas, insights and inspiration to legal professionals so that they can develop a flourishing business and enjoy a rewarding life.

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