



## HOW TO BE A LEADER

By Bernard George

[bernard@socrates-training.co.uk](mailto:bernard@socrates-training.co.uk)

A friend of mine likes to say that practising law would be fine if it were not for the clients. Likewise you may feel that running a law firm would be fine were it not for your colleagues. Few people really enjoy managing lawyers. Fewer still are truly good at it. There are two classic mistakes.

### **Mistake One: David Brent**

Are you too keen to be liked by your colleagues? Can you not see a committee without wanting to be on it? Do you rarely decline an invitation to an event to “represent the firm”? Is much of your time spent on issues nobody cares about, and which will make little long-term difference?

One can easily spend lots of time on management, neglect your practice, but still find you are having little impact.

### **Mistake 2: Richard I**

Richard may have had a lion’s heart, but he was a rotten king. He took no interest in running his kingdom, and spent almost his whole reign off fighting wars. Likewise some so-called law-firm leaders neglect their management role in favour of fee earning. Meetings are cancelled, news goes uncirculated, budgets are set late and not monitored, all because the boss is too busy with clients.

Here are three key principles which the most effective leaders follow.

(1) Prioritise.

The main thing is to make the main thing the main thing. You need a clear sense of the issues that will really make a difference to the future of your firm, and then focus on them. Very often they will involve unpleasant conversations and decisions. Do not bottle out.

(2) Delegate.



You cannot run the whole firm yourself. Allocate tasks, set deadlines, monitor progress, and motivate people to achieve. You have to make the change from being a worker, to being someone who manages the work of others.

(3) Avoid reinventing the wheel.

Having spent years billing by the hour, one can see spending time on a problem as worthwhile, even when you make little progress. Time is a cost. Be ruthless with it. When you can contract tasks out, at a reasonable cost, do so. That applies to most training and know-how.