



Précis Paper

Reducing stress in the legal profession

A discussion of the ways law firms can make changes to address the need for wellbeing in order to reduce stress.

Discussion Includes

- Awareness of mental wellbeing in the legal profession
- Why are we talking more about mental health?
- Removing the stigma
- how do firms approach EQ?
- Defining resilience and wellbeing in a firm
- The six domains of resilience
- Barriers for law firms and legal teams
- Differences between demographics

Précis Paper

Reducing Stress in the Legal Profession

1. In this edition of BenchTV, Renee Branson (RB Consulting, USA) and Sue-Ella Prodonovich (Prodonovich Advisory, Sydney) discuss the ways law firms can make changes to address the need for mental wellbeing in order to reduce stress.

Awareness of mental wellbeing in the legal profession

2. In 2016 the American Bar Association did a study of mental health statistics in the legal profession, publishing their outcomes in 2017. From that they formed their Commission on Wellbeing,
3. The idea was to create a wellbeing pledge that laid out a structure that encourages firms and law departments to make improvements to the work environments in order to improve wellbeing

Why are we talking more about mental health?

4. The problem of mental health has always been there, but now it has become impossible to ignore.
5. The question now is how to move forward from awareness into action.

Removing the stigma

6. There needs to be trust created so that people will safe to ask their firm for help.
7. A variety of resources is needed, no just in-house but externally also.
8. Building practices of resilience in advance prepares you to meet crises when they inevitably arise.

How do firms approach EQ?

9. The business case needs to be made for investing in wellbeing because it really does impact the bottom line in terms of a firm's profitability.
10. 57% of lawyers leave their firms within the first 5 years. Of the women who leave, they tend to leave the profession altogether

Defining resilience and wellbeing in a firm

11. Wellbeing is the ability to thrive in several different domains of a person's life.
12. Resilience is the way a person can achieve this.
13. If a person simply bounces back from crisis, change or challenge, we are back where we used to be. Resilience is the ability to bounce forward, where we have learned and able to move forward.

The six domains of resilience

14. Health and the body. When we are under stress, our bodies will let us know. If we are being resilient, we pay attention to this.
15. Sleep is important. What's more, if clients become aware that lawyers are working late at night on their matters, it can be seen as worrying.
16. Calming and self-soothing. People need the ability to calm and self-soothe. We need to be able to know what to do to achieve this, like breathing exercises.
17. The ability to reason. The two big barriers to reason are perfectionism. Wanting to be perfect limits the ability to reason, because everything is seen in black and white.
18. Catastrophic thinking. If one thing doesn't go the way you want, you immediately think you are going to lose your job.
19. Lawyers are always looking for the catastrophes in their clients work, or what could go wrong, The things that make you good at what you do can also be your Achilles' heel.
20. Staying in your own values and own integrity. Integrity is when our stated values are congruent with our lived behaviours.
21. Optimism: Optimism can be confused with cheerfulness.
22. Grounded optimism means three things: the current crisis challenge or change is not pervasive, not permanent, and most of the time it's not personal. Bad things do not happen to us because we are bad.
23. Connection. When we don't feel connected to people, it is damaging. Lawyers work in isolation a lot, despite a lot of networking. IT is about finding a connection where people can be themselves, and be vulnerable.

Barriers for law firms and legal teams

24. Inveterate scepticism can cause lawyers to push back against discussions of well-being and mental health.
25. The business case needs to be made, so that firms can understand that improving mental health and wellbeing is profitable.

- 26. A clear path towards developing resilience and creating an environment of wellbeing needs to be mapped out.
- 27. There is no single right way to overcome these barriers. There will need to be trials and tests of a variety of methods to reduce stress.
- 28. Wellbeing must be integrated throughout all aspects of the firm.
- 29. Integrating wellbeing is about how you do something differently not additionally

Differences between demographics

- 30. By and large, the problems of reducing stress are the same across age groups and cultures.
- 31. There is a difference between age groups in how they react to stress, Younger generations are more likely to advocate for mental health resources.
- 32. Wellness is seen as a soft skill, however it is tied very closely to high-performance
- 33. The most productive teams have the highest levels of psychological safety with one another, which allowed them to take risks and be innovative.

BIOGRAPHY

Renee Branson

RB Consulting, USA

Combining over 20 years in education, counselling and non-profit management, Renee's passion and purpose is helping individuals, teams, and organizations cultivate resilience. After years of working with survivors of trauma and the caregivers who help heal them, Renee became enthralled with what it was that allowed people to not only survive, but thrive through their greatest crisis. The answer is resilience. What is even more exciting is that resilience can be taught, strengthened and cultivated.

As a Certified Resilience Coach (CReC), Renee provides clients with immediately usable tools to increase resilience, well-being, and optimism in the workplace. She works with lawyers, legal marketers, business professionals, non-profit leaders, and others to help them understand and incorporate resilience in their own professional lives and in the teams they lead.

Renee administers the PR6™ resilience assessments, presentations, and workshops on the six domains of resilience for professionals and business organizations. These include law firms, practice groups, non-profits, and business teams within an organization. This allows leaders to address organizational strengths and weaknesses and to implement growth plans through coaching, consultation, and the Driven™ app-based tools.

Sue-Ella Prodonovich

Prodonovich Advisory, Sydney

Sue-Ella Prodonovich is one of Australia's leading specialists in business development for the professional services and business-to-business sectors. Her clients include some of the country's – and the world's – best law, accounting, IT, engineering and architecture firms.

Sue-Ella has more than 20 years senior level experience winning work and growing businesses in these complex industries. Over that time, she has given countless professionals the tools they need to attract and retain clients and build more profitable, more sustainable and more enjoyable practices.