



Hard Lessons on Soft Skills: Aligning Law School and Law Firm Professionalism Training for the Millennial Generation

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True or False?

A student is in a counseling session with a career advisor at a law school. He's talking about strategies for getting a summer position and casually mentions that he sent compromising photos of himself to a woman on a dating website. The woman turned out to be a partner in a law firm... so he sent her his resume.

TRUE.

True or False?

The year is 2009 and the world is experiencing an economic crisis. A student receives an offer for summer employment in a more suburban geographic region. The student, who is questioning how he/she will commute to the office, calls the law firm to ask about whether the firm can rent him/her a car to facilitate his/her getting into the office and/or pay for a car service daily.

FALSE.

(He called his career services office to ask this)

True or False?

A law student asks someone at a 1L reception what she does. When she replies that she is the recruitment manager of the Silicon Valley office, he replies: “And that’s a full time job?”

TRUE.

True or False?

During the first week of the summer program, a summer associate tells the recruitment manager that his wife got a job in Boston so he will not be returning because the firm does not have an office there.

TRUE.

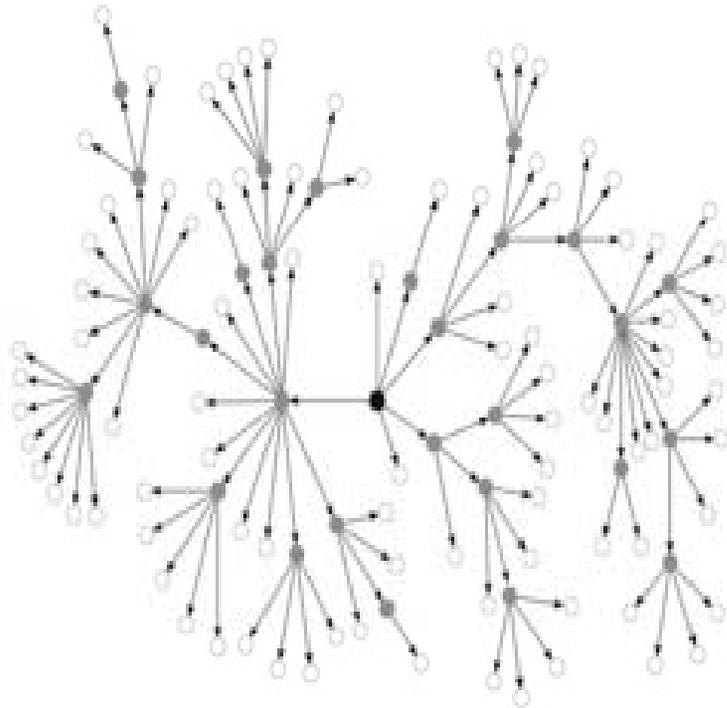
Introduction & Context

- Can IQ be a predictor for success? If not, what can be instructive in predicting success?
- What is “Emotional Intelligence”?
- What are the qualities of “Emotional Intelligence” that impact success?

EMOTIONAL CAPITAL MODEL OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



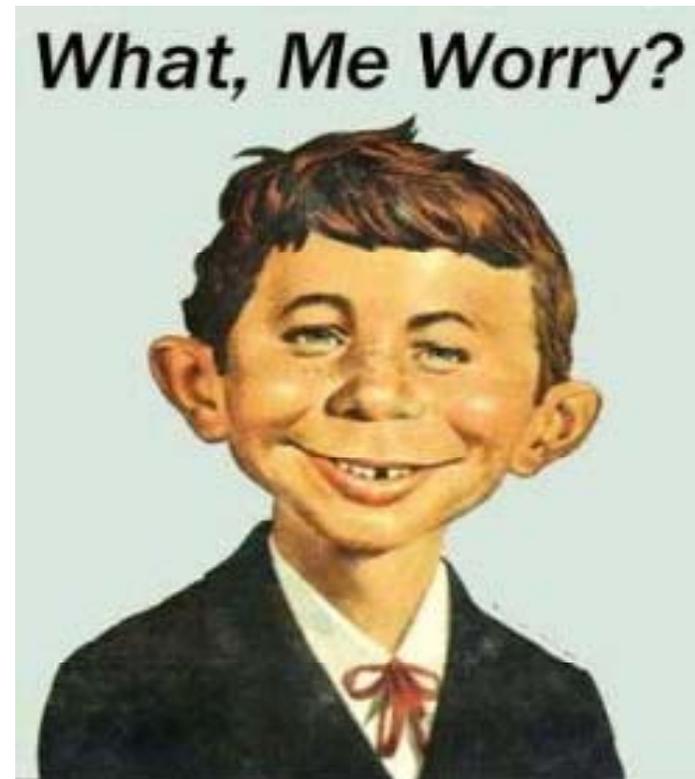
Implications for Failure



- It's not just about "getting the offer" - that's just the beginning
- Closed networks and the spread of information
- The key to workflow
- Slow workflow = low hours = limited tenure

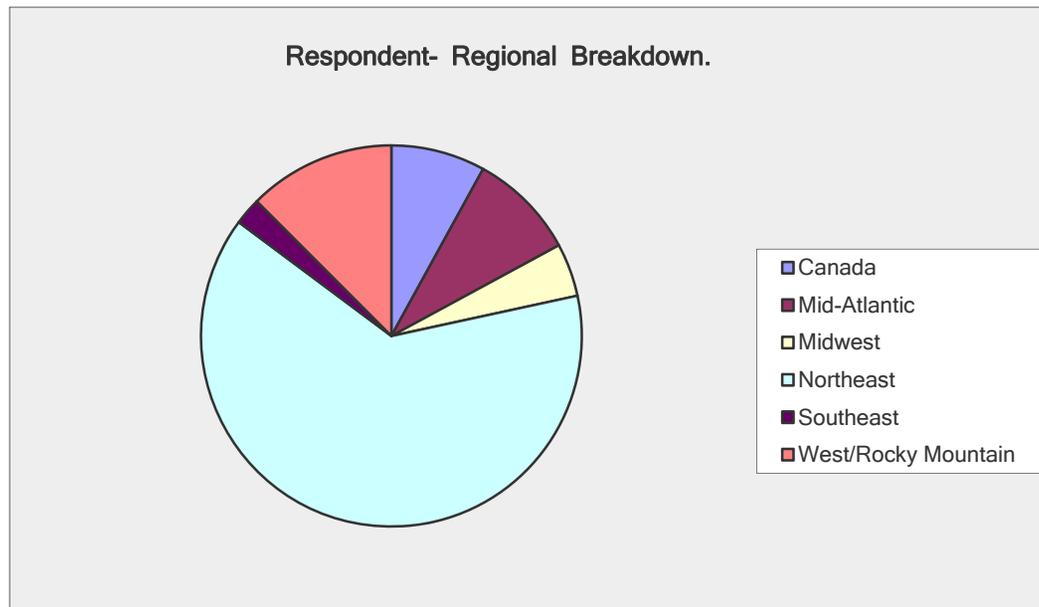
Challenges with “Soft Skills” Curricula

- The “what, me worry?” mentality and building a culture of relevance
- Who should be training on these topics?
- Common challenges and obstacles to including “soft skills” curriculum in training
- The case for collaboration



Current Approaches to Soft Skills Programming- Survey Results

- Background on survey methodology
- Respondents: 46.6% = Law Schools/ 53.4% Legal Employers



Law School Survey Responses

- 41.7% conduct “soft skills” training
- Most popular skills emphasized:
 - Politics/relationship building (80%)
 - Judgment/initiative (60%)
 - Communication (60%)
 - Others
- Not mandatory- students “encouraged to attend”
- Common approaches to publicity and training
- 50% have solicited/received feedback regarding the need for training

Law School Survey Responses

- Most frequent lapses related to communication issues as follows:
 - Lack of proactive communication/responsiveness
 - Understanding of deadlines
 - Issues relating to tone/frequency/medium of communication
 - Poor professional judgment/lack of effective social interaction
- 70% seek feedback from employers during interview process (largely via in person meetings)
- 50% indicated training is successful/50% indicated training “moderately successful”

Legal Employer Survey Responses

- 67.4% conduct some variant of “soft skills” training
- 43.3% plan to add or conduct additional “soft skills” training in 2014
- For those employers that do not do stand-alone training- reasons articulated include:
 - No perceived broad deficiencies
 - Don’t have resources
 - Not enough participation from associates
 - Topics are included as part of “successful summer” programs

Legal Employer Survey Responses

- Most frequent topics for programs include:
 - Initiative, ownership and judgment (87%)
 - Building relationships/office politics (78.3%)
 - Building a personal brand (47.8%)
- Majority of respondents (78.3%) require attendance
- Majority of programming on “soft skills” done as a part of other training programs
- Largely done by recruiting/attorneys/PD personnel when trainings are offered
- Virtually ALL conducted in lecture format or group discussion

Most Significant Issues Identified

- Communication was overwhelmingly the largest issue identified as a gating factor for success
 - Choice of mode of communication
 - Tone of communication
- Responsiveness/working on teams
- Project and time management (including deadlines and multitasking)
- Perception and confidence

Why the Disconnect?



- Generational “culture” critical to developing personality/communication preferences
- “Peer Personality” developed via events in formative years
- Dominant generation creates a behavioral paradigm in an organization
- Paradigms may change as older generations retire- but for now? Social norming.

4 Generations = Divergent Behaviors

Silent Generation (1925-1942)

1. Major war and threat to society
2. Values focused on duty, honor, hard work and respect for rules
3. Peer Personality = dedicated, reverential with practical and formal communication style

Baby Boomers (1943-1960)

1. Era of safety, prosperity, security and conformist attitudes lead to rebellion against a perceived vacant/hollow societal system
2. Peer Personality = personal growth, achievement and economic success, political correctness

4 Generations = Divergent Behaviors

Gen X (1961-1981)

1. Transformation of societal values- rejection against excesses of idealism
2. Most comfortable with casual communication
3. Peer Personality = Tough, pragmatic, individualistic, skeptical and unimpressed with authority

Millennials (1982-2002)

1. Immersed in technology, learning styles (and preferred interactions) impacted
2. High level of parental involvement (most wanted generation)
3. Peer Personality = Crave attention, feedback and guidance; meaningful work, work/life balance

Generational Politics and Communication

Communication medium	55+	25-34 year olds
Face to face	60%	55%
Email	28%	35%
Phone	12%	10%

Excerpted from Harris Interactive for Career Builder Study

- Communication is the #1 issue for Millennials in law firm settings
- Goal of trainings: help Millennials identify and adapt style to preferences/expectations depending on peer culture of generational group

School Side/Firm Side: Communications Programming

- Leverage students to create buy-in (and lend credibility to the case for imminence)
- Consider alternative instructional design techniques- breakout sessions to deconstruct case studies; workshops to provide exposure to creating appropriate communications for varied stakeholders
- Collaborate with firms to incorporate real-life examples to illustrate the prevalence of career-limiting missteps
- Involve firm attorneys/faculty to “preview” communication preferences for different generational groups

Generational Politics and Responsiveness/Team Work

Goal of training:
Help Millennials understand
unique teamwork
considerations of
law firm setting

- Competing styles of multiple supervisors at tiered levels
- Varied stakeholders on any one project
- Numerous projects with competing deadlines vs. direct reporting to one person



School Side/Firm Side: Responsiveness/Teamwork Programming

- Help students get into the “mind” of their supervisor and the client to provide context to expectations
- Adapt programming to level- approaches to responsiveness/team work will change as job changes (junior to mid-level transition; mid-level to senior transition)
 - Summer associates/First year associates: responsiveness to more senior members of team/behaviors modeling good team citizenship
 - Mid-level/Senior associates: responsiveness to clients and leading the team

Missing a deadline or asking for an extension in college or law school only affects:

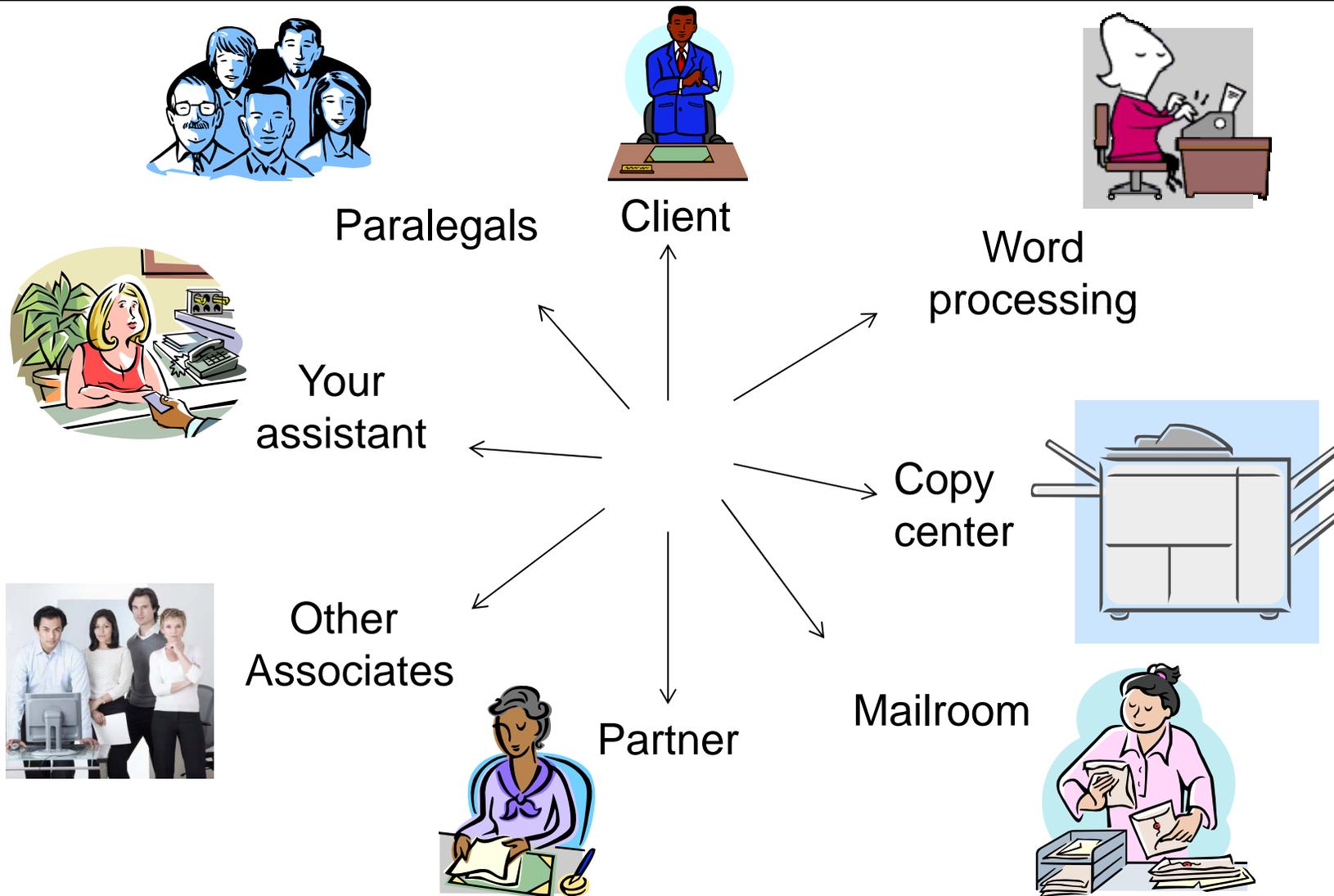
You

&

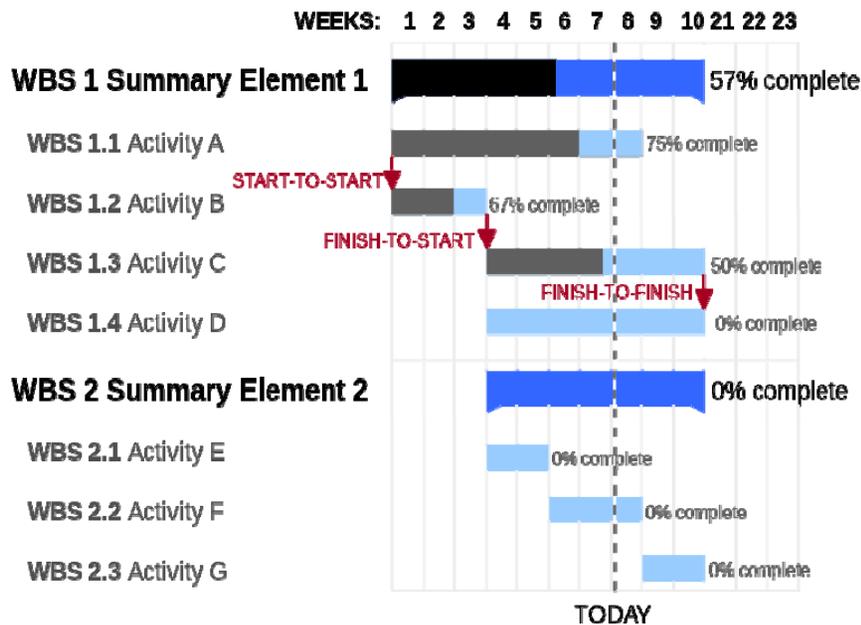
Your Professor



Missing or Moving Deadlines at a Law Firm could affect:



Time Management/Project Management Training



Goal of training:
Help Millennials understand how to manage multiple projects simultaneously; provide strategies/skills for messaging properly to set expectations on deliverables with supervisors.

School Side/Firm Side: Project Management/Time Management

- Lessons from business school: Introduce project management training as part of core curriculum (Gantt charts, stakeholder identification, tiered timelines)
- Time management training/resource optimization (outside consultants or IT trainers)
- Help 3L students identify how law school work differs from work in different legal practice settings as foundation:
 - Summer associate workshops mapping projects/deadlines to deconstruct basic project management
- Leverage assessments to help with creation of adaptive strategies (MBTI, Predictive Index)

Perception, Reputation and Confidence Training

Goal of training:
Help Millennials
understand the pervasive
impact of perception- and
how they can shift
perception based on
comportment, attitude and
communication style.



School Side/Firm Side: Perception/Confidence Programming

- Help students see the “offer” as the beginning- that’s only the start of the journey
- Law schools/law firms should collaborate to help map out the life cycle of an associate from summer program to senior associate to help demonstrate the impact of reputation on all aspects of associate life
 - Leverage “social network” mapping to help illustrate how information spreads and impacts associate life
- Prepare junior attorneys for the “feedback desert”
- Behavioral mapping: articulate reputation-damaging behaviors that impact perception, but are common Millennial habits

Not Responding to a Friend's Email/Text



NO RESPONSE



Katie
assumes you
are too busy



But Katie knows you well and understands that if you don't respond, you're unavailable – this may be acceptable socially

What attorneys may think if you don't respond



I wonder if she got my emails

I went out of my way to help, and she couldn't even take the time to respond

No response

She's not interested in making connections with attorneys

I hope she is more responsive to attorneys she works with

Should I tell her it's rude when she doesn't respond?

BRAINSTORMING SESSION & HYPOTHETICALS

Scenario #1

A summer associate is off-site at a hotel working with a trial team. People are hunkered down, working on preparing exhibits and witness outlines for the next day . A partner and senior associate are in a side room preparing a witness. Another associate is working with the trial graphics consultant to get the demonstrative slides ready. Another is reviewing the evidentiary issues that may arise regarding the exhibits to be offered the next day. Dinner is ordered in. After eating, the summer associate announces, “I’m going to go for a run, in case you need to find me.”

Scenario #2

A summer associate is working on two simultaneous assignments. Project 1 has a deadline on Friday, Project 2 has a deadline the following week. Project 2's deadline gets moved up to the day before Project 1 is due, and the summer associate now doesn't think he/she can finish Project 1 with the new deadline for the other assignment.

Scenario #3

A prospective first-year associate has cleared the conflicts check process at her firm, and is awaiting confirmation of her start date once her references have cleared. She emails the recruitment coordinator saying, “It is my understanding that I cleared the conflicts check on Monday and you indicated then that you'd be reaching out to my references promptly. It is now Friday and none of my references have been contacted. If my start date is still October 1, I'd like to plan accordingly.”

Scenario #4

A law firm partner who is conducting on-campus interviews tells the school's recruiting coordinator that a student didn't show up for an interview. The recruiting coordinator sees the student and says, "You missed your on-campus interview with X firm." Student - "Oh well, thanks for letting me know."

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