

TRADITIONAL LAW FIRM LEADERSHIP STYLES ARE FAILING; 'EMPATHETIC MENTORS' NOW NEEDED

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The traditional authoritarian model of leadership used in law firms is now redundant and senior lawyers now need to be more "empathetic and supportive" and take on mentor-type roles, attendees at a



The 'presence-based' culture that still exists in Spain must be overcome, participants were told

recent InspiraLaw event in Madrid heard. Event participants, which included leading women lawyers and in-house counsel from law firms and companies in Spain, also argued that the qualities needed for the new style of leader that is now required are generally inherent in women.

Effective leaders are now required to have "softer soft skills", attendees heard. "The old model [of leadership] isn't working anymore," said Belen Viyella Molina, legal director at Equifax. "There is a

Event: InspiraLaw – Talent has no gender
Location: Madrid

demand for leaders to be more like mentors in the legal sector and all sectors," she added.

Many companies are already implementing this style of leadership and are attracting the top talent as a result. Participants commented that flexible schedules, "open door" policies [under which managers encourage staff to approach them with ideas and concerns], career progression plans and training programmes are among the benefits offered in the business world, with the result that some lawyers are choosing an in-house career rather than a job in a law firm.

Maria Pilar García Guijarro, managing partner of Watson Farley Williams' Madrid office said her firm's philosophy involved understanding that "flexibility is key". She continued: "I believe offering a balanced work environment is perfectly achievable – we know that in order to retain talent, we need to reshape our working model."

'Presence-based culture' must end

Meanwhile, Clifford Chance partner Yolanda Azanza said that what lawyers want is "control over their time". She added: "We need



Attendees said it is important women support and promote other women

to overcome the 'presence-based' culture that still exists in Spain."

Participants also argued that effective leadership goes beyond flexible working policies. Building trusting and nurturing relationships is also important to both legal teams as well as their clients. "Creating relationships based on trust is a key strategy for the future of the legal profession," said Marta García-Valenzuela, partner at leadership consultants Talengo.

"Strong relationships [among women] are essential" said Rosa Espin, counsel at Latham & Watkins. "We can never underestimate the importance of women supporting and promoting other women."



The qualities needed for the new style of leader are generally inherent in women, attendees heard

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