SSBR- PhD by Portfolio

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THE NEW PROCESS: DOVETAILING OLD THINKING AND CURRENT REALITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author's name is Ayodele Oni. He works with Bloomfield LP ("**BLP**" or the "**Firm**"), a full-service, mid-sized tier-2 specialist commercial law firm (Chambers and Partners, 2024) in Ikoyi, Lagos Nigeria. The author is an Equity Partner and the Chair of the Firm's Energy and Natural Resources Practice Group. The Energy and Natural Resources Group advises the government and private sector clients on energy (especially oil, gas, power and renewables) policies, transactions and projects, generally. The author also functions as the Staff Partner in charge of employee recruitment, engagements and experience, at the most senior management level of the Firm. Consequently, he makes operational and strategic decisions in response to those challenges which arise from time to time. The author is renowned for energy transactions and regarded as a leading Nigerian lawyer for oil, gas, power, renewables, and mining (CBNC Africa, 2021).

INSPIRATION

One observation that the author made, and which made him take this course in the first place, is the observation that second generation successful Nigerian law firms are not doing nearly as great as when the first-generation equity partners were in charge of those firms. It appears they have lost some of their 'mojo'. Most of them have been tacitly sold to foreign firms because they can no longer generate the volumes and value of deals they did, when the now retired or retiring equity partners ran the businesses of the firms.

The author realized that many of these retired or retiring equity partners brought in large value deals in large volumes and were indeed rainmakers but brought up partners who were usually only excellent at 'taking and doing good to excellent work' and were not 'makers' or rainmakers- in fact, many of the would-be rainmakers have left these firms to start their own firms and are now 'eating' into the value and volumes of deals these firms did in the past. The author's conclusion appears to be that a law firm business (at least in Nigeria) suffers when there are more 'takers'- those who take work brought in by rainmakers, than 'makers'- those who bring in new work who are also referred as rainmakers.

Hence, the author wanted to understand how to avoid that same mistake and run a more successful- in the long term, law firm whilst also keeping an eye on the author's particular area of expertise, which is energy. The author wanted to understand how law firms, as businesses, can be better managed and run to ensure the repeat of same mistake, sustainably.

INTRODUCTION

This document (herein refer to as the "**Proposal**") is prepared as a business proposal aimed at solving challenges peculiar to BLP in response to the continuing changes in the world viz a viz the need for the Firm to consummate new ideas and processes in order to get ahead of the changes concerning its organizational structure and culture. The Proposal, first of all, evaluates the old methodology along the lines of the current realities so as to understand the suitability or otherwise of some of these methodologies. This understanding then forms the basis of creating new methods and developing new ideas for organizational efficiency, profitability and sustainability in the face of the changing times.

By current realities, the reference is to change in demography of employees viz a viz applicable behavioural patterns, new ways of working post COVID-19 and advancement in technology, recent economic realities, increase in competition and market demands, etc.

Accordingly, the author has set out, in this Proposal, amongst other things, the experiences and events leading to the development of new processes, the methodology and proposed approach to executing these new ideas. The Proposal shall be addressed on a micro and macro level, taking into consideration possible reactions from every angle of the Firm as well as effective ways to manage those reactions. The author will focus on and demonstrate knowledge of what is happening in the legal industry (in which he plays a significant role), current and anticipated trends amongst all the stakeholder who make up the industry. As one of the requirements, the Proposal will not turn deaf hears to some global discourse like the environment, sustainable development, global political situation, technological disruption, etc.

Indeed, the author is positive, and optimistic about this Proposal, believing that the new ideas and processes that would be identified therein will help the Firm to redefine its vision for the future and rethink its organizational goals and objectives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In view of the nature of this research topic, a combination of doctrinal and empirical research methods will be adopted. For the doctrinal method, the author makes use of a theoretical approach by consulting scholarly materials to back up the main argument and support the ideas proposed herein.

On the other hand, the empirical method involves reliance on observations and experiments that the author has carried out personally or those that were reliably brought to his knowledge in respect of the subject-matter. For example, although informally, the author has conversations with associates individually and as a team about some of the challenges they face in their personal and work life. Also, having worked in four (4) different leading law firms in Nigeria, the author reminisces his experience in these formal employments as well as interactions with some his former colleagues in making a case for this Proposal.

In addition, and as a form of empirical approach, the author, having gathered about twenty (20) years of experience in the industry, considers general industry standards in the presentation of this Proposal. This is with a view to presenting ideas that are more developed and improved than what is obtainable in the industry.

DETAILED REPORT/PROPOSAL

For clarity of thought and ease on the part of the reader, the Proposal is broken down into different sub-heads under which it is presented.

Firm's Structure

As explained in a previous module, the Firm runs a two-tier partnership structure which promises a faster route for employees (lawyers and non-lawyers) who have proven their excellence and hard work over the years to become partners. With respect to lawyers, for example, the idea is that a person gains employment as a Trainee Associate and rises through the ranks to partnership. Rising through the ranks in this regard is through promotion which is strictly performance-based – essentially, an employee needs to be adjudged exceptional for such employee to be promoted from one level on the cadre to another.

According to Kotter's 8 step change model, in the pursuit of positive change, it is important to remove the obstacles that slow things down or create roadblocks to progress (Bell, n.d.). The proponent of this theory is of the opinion that removing obstacles can empower the people you need to execute your vision, and it can help the change move forward. In line with this theory and as a testament to the author's commitment to human capital development, the author is proposing a tweak to the above structure.

In this regard, a strict baseline grade will be agreed upon by the Firm's management as the minimum performance requirement for year-end appraisals with clear measurement metrics. Every associate who meets this requirement year-in-year-out gets at least one level promotion while associates who demonstrate exceptional capacity can get double promotion. The idea is simple – create a very definitive structure such that every associate (even a Trainee Associate) has an idea of the number of years it will take them to rise through the ranks in as much as they meet the minimum requirement. The good thing about this structure is that while there is still some human factor, promotion (and by extension, the path to rise through the ranks) is clear and largely based on actual performance.

However, the con identified with this structure is that it may lead to being heavy at the top and light at the base. The immediate strategy to address this is by creating a few levels as is reasonably required within the already existing cadre. This way, a number of associates operate at mid-level (a very crucial level in an organization) and provide the requisite guidance to the junior ones for a considerable time frame.

Another proposal to the Firm's structure is with respect to non-lawyers who are referred to as administrative staff. Till this time, the Firm has not utilised the 'catch them young' mantra in this regard because administrative staff are usually employed as fulltime staff. Therefore, as it is applicable to lawyers, the author proposes a situation whereby administrative staff are also employed straight out of university on a trainee basis. This will foster inclusivity and give non-lawyers who have demonstrated academic excellence and are considered a good fit to be employed into the Firm just like their lawyer counterparts.

Finally, with respect to admission to Partnership, the author is proposing that salary partners will be those who have consistently done excellent work but who haven't brought in sufficient work or clientele. Those who have consistently done excellent work and brought in client money and clientele, will immediately become equity partners instead of waiting another five (5) years or more, from making salaried partner to equity partner. This would also ensure that Associates are more driven to not only do the work but to also generate business. This will change the current structure and could also help improve profitability of the Firm.

<u>Firm's Culture</u>

Generally, the Firm combines several cultural mixes for the attainment of its overall goal. One of the cultural mixes is the hierarchy culture which involves a clear definition between management and employees and individuals know where they fit into the corporate structure, and employees have clearly defined job duties (Factorial, 2023). While this type of culture creates a stable and efficient business through the calculated management of risks and transparent business practices and levels of authority (Indeed, 2024), creating a strict distinction between management and employees, however, may conflict with ownership mentality being preached by the Firm.

The author understands that having ownership mentality is not just about the employees creating the mindset, it is also about the organization giving room or creating an environment whereby the employees could feel like 'owners' (BlueOceanBrain, n.d.).

Kotter's 8 steps change model also states that to foster change, a leader must inspire people to act to achieve a bold, aspirational opportunity and build momentum that excites people to pursue a clear vision of the future together (Bell, n.d.),. In essence, this theory opines that when people are able to see for themselves what you're trying to achieve, then the directives they're given tend to make more sense to them. Therefore, the author is proposing a culture where employees have a great sense of belonging within the hierarchy. One of the ways the author seeks to achieve this is by positioning employees, who have shown capacity and integrity, as faces of the Firm. For example, delegation of speaking engagements, representing the Firm at events, meetings, etc., and general interaction with the outside world under the auspices of the Firm.

One critical risk that the author notes here is the possibility of this being counterproductive with employee retention. Experience has shown that when associates are given the opportunity to 'fly high' by representing the Firm at events, they are then open to being poached by competitors who are also at the event to witness the knowledge and excellence displayed by such associate. A strategy to mitigate this risk is continuous improvement on employee welfare which would be particularly discussed somewhere in this Proposal.

Strategic Management

The Firm largely adopts the prescriptive strategy which involves setting objectives in advance, planning towards achieving the objectives, and implementation of plan (M. Gonan Božac, 2017). For example, the Firm the Firm draws up objectives to be achieved at the beginning of every year with respect to business development through publication of articles, titbits and client alerts addressing different legal and commercial issue to provide free of charge insight to the public, particularly stakeholders in the industry to which the write-up relates.

Although, to a reasonable extent, the Firm employs the emergent process which is not the result of pre-planning but rather emerges over time in response to changes and needs in the environment (Nathan, 2023). However, the author is of the view that more needs to be done in this regard - beyond thinking ahead and creating a vision for everyone to implement, there is a need to stand as a learner who operates in a way that gives room for patterns to be recognised and thereby developing strategies as they emerge.

As a result, the author is making a proposal that within twenty-four hours of the emergence of an unprecedented event, the Firm's management constitutes an ad-hoc committee comprising of the relevant partner and other employees carefully selected as suitable in the circumstance. Upon constitution, the committee will be given their terms of reference which will include an investigation of the situation and provision of a detailed report and recommendation for the consideration of the management.

Professional Ranking

In the legal profession, there are certain international and local bodies which provide rankings, accolades, and awards to law firms under different areas of expertise. As a matter of fact, the Firm's expertise cuts across practice groups including Corporate, Finance & Securities, Energy and Natural Resources, Intellectual Property and Information Technology, Immigration, Employment and Labour practice groups, Shipping and Oil Services and Dispute Resolution amongst others. This is evident as the Firm is continually ranked in the Dispute Resolution, Energy and Natural Resources Banking, Finance & Capital Markets, Corporate, Commercial and M&A, Shipping & Transport, and the Real Estate and Construction practice areas by "The Legal 500: Europe, Middle East & Africa" (The Legal 500, 2024) for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023. The Firm and a number of its experts were also ranked by Who's Who Legal ("WWL") – Corporate Immigration 2024, WWL- Nigeria 2023, WWL-Thought Leaders- Africa 2024, WWL- Real Estate 2023, and WWL- Transport 2024.

Also, the Firm has received accolades and reports by both Nigerian and international rating agencies such as the Legal 500 (2022 Rankings) which reflected that the Firm had been recognized as being "*very professional in their dealings*" as its lawyers "*handhold their clients and ensure all the legal implication of the deals are well understood by the client*".

The foregoing notwithstanding, the Firm has not gotten to the highest level in the ranks across all its areas of expertise required to attain the overall tier-1 rank as a firm. In this regard, the author is clear in his mind that this is not as a result of any impairment in the Firm's profile and experiences, rather it is due to fact that the Firm is relatively young and other surrounding factors.

Getting ranked by these bodies involves submission of entries in the form and manner prescribed by the ranking agency. In this regard, the author has come to the realization that the process involved in the submission of entries for these rankings requires special attention, skill and expertise. Therefore, as against the current practice whereby associates in the different practice groups are the ones who fill these entries, the author now proposes the use of experts who are trained and skilled in the art of filling entries for nominations and rankings. Apart from having the skill and expertise, this approach will help achieve more attention being paid to the modalities and rules stipulated by the ranking agencies for entry submissions, and the author believes it will go a long way in improving the Firm's ranking by these bodies/agencies.

The author is aware that the idea here suggests additional cost to the Firm. However, as espoused by Ravin (Jesuthasan, 2019), the above can be achieved through outsourcing which is another hallmark of the third industrial revolution and utilised typically for efficiency and/or labour arbitrage or through gig workers who are a rapidly growing source of labour that take on short-term assignments and projects. In essence, the Firm does not necessarily have to employ fulltime staff specifically for this purpose so that the financial implications (pension, healthcare, bonus and other benefits enjoyed by fulltime staff) on the Firm are not so much, and the Firm is still able to achieve the same goal.

<u>Information Technology</u>

One of the services rendered by the Corporate, Finance and Securities arm of the Firm is company secretarial services. This basically involves performing the functions of a company secretary which includes keeping the relevant records about the company as required under the applicable laws and relevant regulator, convening and coordinating the meetings of shareholders and board of directors, etc (JTC, 2024).

Usually, when meetings are held, the associate(s) responsible for the company takes handwritten records which will be used to draft the action points and minutes of such meeting. What is good about this method? It helps associate's concentration and capacity building. However, the method has proven to be time and energy consuming such that the time spent on writing minutes alone seem not to be commensurate with the fees received by the Firm in respect of these company secretarial services. Therefore, the author proposes and encourages leveraging technology, particularly artificial intelligence for more efficiency in this regard.

From the author's understanding of Roger's Diffusion of Innovation theory, the author sees himself as an early adopter – someone who waits until a product or service receives some reviews before making a purchase (CFI Team, n.d.). According to

Rogers, earlier adopters have less dogmatism, a more favorable attitude toward change, a greater ability to cope with uncertainty and risk, a more favorable attitude toward education and science, and higher achievement motivation. They display different communication behaviour. Earlier adopters have more social participation, have greater exposure to mass media and interpersonal communication channels, engage in more active information seeking, exhibit greater knowledge of innovations, and are more likely to belong to highly interconnected systems (Garcia-Aviles, 2020).

In light of the Roger's theory above and having witnessed the workability of technology in respect of the subject, the author proposes purchase and subscription, by the Firm, to virtual meeting AI tools that can record the meeting and transcribe into written form. In fact, there are purpose-built AI tools for corporate meetings which has the ability to transcribe the meeting in proposer minutes format. The justification for this is the fact that it saves time and offers more efficiency. Also, when a cost analysis is done viz a viz time value of money, it would be realized that in the long run, the billable time associates spend on drafting minutes from handwritten notes taken at the meeting is more than the cost of purchasing these AI tools.

If the above is put in place, the author expects that, as a yardstick to measure progress in this regard, reports and minutes of board and committee meeting which ordinarily takes one (1) to two (2) weeks can be shared with clients within seventy-two (72) hours. This does not only help save billable time, but also ensures that the Firm is seen as more efficient and effective, especially as external company secretaries.

<u>Client Demographics</u>

The Firm's clients are majorly companies, joint venture enterprises, government, and regulators. These categories of clients cut across oil and gas companies, power companies, banks and other financial institutions, regulators in the Nigerian oil and gas industry, telecommunication companies, shipping and logistics companies, international immigration consultants, etc.

Flowing from the above, the author would like to address this sub-head with a focus on the Dispute Resolution team of the Firm even though the author is not a member of that team. From the author's fair assessment of the team, majority of cases handled by the team are those stemming from shipping/maritime dispute, and labour and employment issues. Thus, the author believes this does not portray the full potential of the team (and the Firm on a larger scale) as dispute resolution is much more than shipping and those arising out of an employment relation.

In this regard therefore, the author's proposition is a disruptive diversification through the already existing relationship with clients who believe in the Firm's expertise in other areas such as energy and natural resources, finance, tax, etc. The author does not see a reason why the Firm should not be settling disputes (either in court or through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms) arising out of oil and gas transactions and activities, disputes at the tax appeal tribunal, high profile criminal defence matters and so on. It is important to mention that the author has started to put work in place in respect of this, and a testament to that is the recent engagement gotten by the Firm from a leading indigenous oil and gas company with regards to a dispute arising out of an oil and gas transaction.

Competitor Analysis

In a previous module, the author stated the fact that the Nigerian legal industry, is a highly competitive environment (Atoyebi, 2024) as there are several highly revered and competent commercial (Legal500, 2025) and dispute resolution (Legal500, 2025) law firms with experienced and qualified professionals. This presents a situation of competition to maintain relevance in the market, to continue to secure the best clients, and to reach and remain as a top tier law firm.

Beyond the Nigerian market, the author realistically believes that the Firm should look forward to providing cross-boarder advisory. The starting point could be from the Firm's existing clients who are either international clients that the Firm has advised on a Nigerian matter or Nigerian clients with international affiliations. The Firm can leverage on its dual qualified lawyers (i.e. lawyers who are qualified to practice law in another jurisdiction apart from Nigeria) and other lawyers with foreign education and work experience in the actualization of this. In fact, with proper implementation plan put in place, this could be a precursor to the Firm sponsoring its associates to get dual or multiple qualification, and even to setting up a branch of the Firm outside Nigeria.

This idea presents a financial challenge which is addressed in paragraph 2 of the concluding part of this Proposal. As a measure of success in this regard, the author expects that in the next five (5) to ten (10) years, the Firm will be involved in at least ten (10) cross-boarder transactions every year.

Corporate Image

The typical corporate social responsibility that Nigerian law firms undertake is to offer pro-bono services to indigent members of the society especially when it has to do with human rights enforcement (Chioma, 2020). This is considered very good but does not exactly receive the social regard it used to receive – this is because of the notion that lawyers now offer services pro-bono particularly to meet up with certain requirements of getting conferred with the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria.

To build a more acceptable corporate reputation, the author proposes to embark on educational corporate social responsibility in addition to some of the things being done by the Firm in this regard. The author's focus is to provide a reorientation for young people about dignity of labour, the importance of education and how education can be an effective tool for poverty eradication. The CSR contemplated in this regard will be focused on primary and secondary school teenagers. Intriguing and exciting activities such as oratory contest, quizzes, case study presentations etc will be organized to be competed amongst these school students with the aim of reinvigorating their interest in education. The author will invite reputable and successful men and women of different spheres of life as vivid evidence of how education can take the student places. The author believes that with proper planning and organization, this is achievable. Also, when the students see and have close contacts and even fireside chats with these invitees whom they only hear about in the news, they are encouraged to study hard, and this can spur their interest in different career paths.

What challenge does this present? the personnel/human resource required to plan these events. Or is the author looking at the possibility of adding this to the engagements of associates who are already very occupied in the Firm? Or does the Firm want to outsource the planning of these events thereby leading to additional expenses? The answer to this challenge is through the engagement of undergraduates or fresh graduates during the summer holidays as volunteer interns under the direction of the Firm's administrative personnel.

Firm's Profitability

Profitability of the Firm largely depends on its client base both in term of numbers and value (Porter, 1986). One of the commonest ways organizations try to achieve this is by attracting more clients. While it is good to onboard more clients, it is even better and easier to retail the existing ones. Therefore, the author recognizes the need to develop a business process that assists with the Firm's profitability through strategies to retain current clients and acquire new ones. There are already in existence processes (such as provision of quality service that is fast and attends to the needs of the clients) for retaining clients. However, the author considers the possibility of using some unorthodox strategies to achieve this goal.

Usually, law firms' events are for the people working in the law firm. The author is proposing a situation whereby clients are invited to join in the Firm's events to show that they are very much regarded as a formidable part of the Firm. In fact, as we speak, the author is currently planning a meet-and-greet in the Firm's office specifically for clients within the Firm's Energy and Natural Resources team. The purpose is for the clients to come around, put a face to the names they have been exchanging emails with and generally interact. Also, it will serve as a platform for some of the clients to meet and create independent professional relationship as they operate within the same industry. The author firmly believes that if any relationship created in this gathering leads to a business transaction, that will automatically lead to an engagement for the Firm's professional services.

Furthermore, professionals (not just lawyers) provide professional training to people either as a paid masterclass or when a professional body invites them for a seminar or conference. In this regard, the author seeks to deviate a bit from the norm for client retention and attraction. The plan is to put in place well thought out professional trainings tailored towards the needs of a particular industry. The trainings, which will cut across the legal aspect of the business activities in that industry, we receive highly experienced professionals in that industry who will share their practical experiences with the audience. From this, the audience who are businesspeople of a particular industry are taught some nuances of the legal implication of certain aspects of their business operations. This platform will create value that will help reinstate the Firm's relationship with existing clients and has a high possibility of generating more clients for the Firm.

In addition, as an offshoot of diversification analysed previously in this Proposal, the author recognizes the dynamic nature of the business environment and the emergence of non-traditional ways of generating income. This dynamism and new business opportunities are characterized by a unique set of challenges which require legal solutions. In this respect, the author plans to identify emerging profitable business ventures such as the social media space, content creation viz a viz business influencing, etc. and leverage on its diverse experiences and expertise to break into these environments with the aim of providing bespoke legal advisory services that help people in these industries to reduce or manage risks.

Further to implementing the above and as a metric to measuring the success of this, it is anticipated that the Firm will be grossing at least seventy-five percent (75%) increase in its income year in year out.

Commissions Structure

Recently some of Nigeria's biggest law fins have lost some of their best and highest income earning Partners to other Firms. One common reason for this, from my research is that there is a lack of a commissions system such that they bring in some much work and income and share equally with other Partners or even get less depending on their equity. Those Partners who bring in the work and client then get dissatisfied over time and leave. One thing I am proposing is to introduce a bonus structure, such that for every transaction for which a client pays, the Partner who brings in the work gets say a 20% commission (after all costs) from the payment made by the client. I believe this would help keep younger equity Partners and further encourage salaried partners to work hard to become equity partners.

Where this is done, a Partner who would have got say hundred million Naira in profit share, if they brough in half of that hundred million naira can get ten million naira as commissions instead of not getting anything. This concept may also be adopted for Associates, too as it would ensure that people get better focused on client engagement and retention. This would ensure that the Firm develops and keeps 'rain-makers' in the Firm.

Employee Welfare

An aspect of this has been addressed above under the Firm's structure – where the author made a proposition with respect to promotions and rising through the ranks.

Now, when conversations are had about employee welfare in Nigeria, we typically limit it to remuneration and creating a healthy work environment. Considering the economic realities of Nigeria and what is obtainable in the labour market, the remuneration plan in the Firm is considerably good. Also, the Firm operates a flexible work culture that presents a relaxed work atmosphere devoid of toxicity and unnecessary pressure. However, the author understands that beyond remuneration and healthy work environment, there are other plans that could be put in place to cater to the welfare of employees particularly the younger ones.

Research has shown that one of the five tier model of human needs is psychological (which includes shelter) (Conway, n.d.). According to Abraham Maslow (McLeod, 2024), human needs are arranged in a hierarchy, with survival needs at the bottom, and the more creative and intellectually oriented 'self-actualization' needs at the top. The idea here is that survival needs must be satisfied before the individual can satisfy the higher needs. Accordingly, from the author's interactions with some young associates, the author found out that the major challenges encountered by this category of persons at the early stage of their career is accommodation and mobility – in fact, a substantial part of their income at the stage is spent on rent and contribution towards getting a car to enhance their mobility in a city like Lagos. No wonder

In this regard, the author proposes an improvement on the already existing housing allowance paid by the Firm to its employees. Also, the author proposes a voluntary vehicle subscription plan such that the Firm will procure affordable cars to interested employees with an agreed payment plan to be deducted from the employees' salaries over a period of time. This way, the major problems faced by the employees at the early stage of their career is solved and they will not be faced with the problem of inflation which they would have faced if they had to wait for two years, for example, to save up money to purchase the same car.

Employee Retention

Employees are considered very crucial in the formation and growth of the human and social capital of an organisation and are a key source of knowledge and support for the development and implementation of sustainable management of human resources in an evolving global business environment (Mohuiddin, 2022). Therefore, their retention is paramount in the organization. However, as a result of several factors such as migration, changes in labour landscape, etc., retention of high skilled and valuable employee has proven to be a big challenge in the Nigerian labour market in recent times (Monteiro, 2024).

Research has shown that the way to retain valuable employees, in the face of current challenges, is by creating job satisfaction and that is simply what the author's proposition is all about on this point. To create job satisfaction in a dynamic work environment, certain things must be put into consideration. For example, the demography of employees in the current workspace are now more of generation Zs and millennials with a unique behavioural pattern. A vast majority of these category of people prefer to work with a coach instead of a boss in the traditional sense (Deichler, 2021) and demand work-life integration which includes flexible work schedules and hybrid work system (O.C. Tanner Institute, 2023).

The challenge here is the demography of employees and managing their expectations in their own 'world'. As advised by Laura and Erik (Roth, 2021), when an organization faces a challenge, it is usually forced to suddenly shift to agile ways of working. In fact, organizations that have been able to make it out of the crisis mode should make these agile models a part of their next normal rather than reverting to the old normal.

As one of the realities brought about by COVID-19, the Firm already operates a hybrid work schedule such that employees come in physically to the office three (3) days in a week while they work from home the remaining two (2) days. In this Proposal and having seen the effectiveness of the hybrid work pattern, the author presents a case for a review of the hybrid schedule to add one (1) more day to the days the employees work from home while they come into the office physically twice in a week unless circumstances demand otherwise.

The metrics the author is putting in place to measure success in this regard is for the Firm to be able to retain all its top performing employees from bottom to the topmost position in the hierarchy.

CONCLUSION

The author has presented above certain propositions and innovative ideas to reinvent part of processes of the Firm. The idea is to create a dynamic of real change in the Firm. However, presentations such as this, no matter how beautiful, must be married with proper implementation and will. Implementation is a crucial aspect of strategic planning because it involves execution of plans and tracking the progress and plans to ensure the plans stay on track and meets their objectives. Effective implementation helps to nip potential issues in the bud from the early stages, make informed decisions, and take corrective actions to keep the plans on course where necessary.

An immediate challenge that could be seen on the surface of this proposition is the finances that may be involved but according to Scott (Kirsner, 2021), trying to shrink-wrap your most promising ideas in a tight layer of metrics too early, will suffocate them, and the desire to apply the same metrics to fledgling products and cash cows often keeps organizations stuck in the status quo. Therefore, before turning one’s back at any idea because of the seeming cost implication, it might be very important to do a cost benefit analysis of such idea against the applicable cost implication both in the short term and in the long run. This will help in making a more informed decision than just throwing the idea out of the window because of the surface level financial considerations.

Another challenge that may be encountered in the implementation of this Proposal is monitoring and assessment. This involves setting up clear monitoring mechanisms is essential such as defining key performance indicators (KPIs) that align with the goals and objectives. These KPIs serve as benchmarks for measuring progress and success of the Proposal in the context of the identified sub-heads analysed in this Proposal. Regularly collecting information related to these KPIs is vital for monitoring progress accurately. Once the monitoring mechanisms are in place, the next step is to analyse the information collected. The Firm is expected to periodically review the information to assess if the Proposal is efficient and is meeting the desires in the fast-changing work environment. A comparison between the current situation and what the Proposal seeks to achieve will help the Firm to identify, in real time, the efficiency or otherwise of the Proposal. Analysing this in turn helps in understanding the root causes of issues that might have probably been misjudged and determining the necessary actions to address them.

APPENDIX 1
SUMMARY OF THE WORK ON STRATEGIC PLAN FROM MODULE 1

The work on strategic plan (the "**Plan**") in module 1 was presented as an outlook for the Firm to identify organizational goals and objectives, and to define the author's vision for the future. The Plan, which is a five (5) year outlook, covers the Firm's activity as a whole but focuses more on the Energy and Natural Resources team which the author oversees. The Plan considers organizational structure/culture, style and people issues, organisation resources and capabilities. It also examines global issues like sustainability, diversity and gender balance, availability of resources etc.

With respect to structure and culture, the Firm operates under a partnership and comprises of both lawyers and non-lawyers, and the Firm maintains a high-level culture of respect for human dignity, personality. To achieve its goals, the Firm combines the client-focused culture, market-driven culture and employee focused culture.

Talking about strategies, the Firm operates both the prescriptive and emergent strategies which essentially is a combination of (i) working towards an already predetermined objectives along the lines of the plans made for same; and (ii) having the required flexibility to respond to emerging circumstances. On this point, the author concluded that a critical area that needs improvement would be in respect of the prescriptive process in developing strategies – where a strategy has been developed in advance for future implementation and the said strategy is found to be unimplementable, the Firm needs to be positioned to turn the strategy around or develop an alternative strategy that is capable of achieving the same goal and not just abandon the goal set to be achieved in line with that strategy.

Having examined the above, the author proceeded to identifying the Firm's goal and objectives and setting achievable action plans towards the realization of those goal and objectives. For example, one of the objectives of the Firm is to build a formidable team of skilled individuals who have gained valuable experiences over a reasonable length of time. This is very important for continuity, consistency in work delivery, client satisfaction, and client management. Another objective of the Firm is to remain profitable as this is a measure of accomplishment and is essential to expanding the Firm's operations. In addition, the Firm seeks to build a very good reputation within the market and to attain the rank of tier-1 law firm in the books of the ranking organizations. Lastly, the Firm fancies an attractive reward structure cutting across remunerations, promotions and other benefits.

In furtherance of the Firm's goal and objectives, the author provided action plans that could be implemented to achieve those goal and objectives. With respect to building a team with considerable experience, the author suggests plans geared towards talent retention and welfare. To make the Firm profitable, the author explains the dynamics involved in retaining existing clients and getting new ones as the basis for revenue generation and overall profit making.

APPENDIX 2
SUMMARY OF THE WORK COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING FROM MODULE 2

The work on collaborative problem-solving and decision making from module 2 (the "**Work**") simply elucidates how the concepts of autonomy, collaboration and hierarchy work in the Firm towards making decisions and solving problems.

According to the analysis done in the Work, problem solving and decision making within the Firm comprises administrative and professional problem solving and/or decision making. This is such that for issues that are purely administrative, conversations and actions in this regard would typically lie with the administrative staff (non-lawyers) led by the Practice Manager while professional decision making usually involves the associates, team leads and the partners. Essentially, decision-making and problem solving in Firm is both cross-cutting and delegated such that the Firm leverages on its resourceful staff base for brainstorming and bringing up innovative ideas and planning towards solving a particular problem or making a decision.

The author explains the relationship between formal and informal decision-making processes and how leveraging both types of power can enhance decision-making effectiveness, foster collaboration, and ensure more inclusive and accepted outcomes. The author states that strict application of the formal process involves a hierarchy or a chain of command within the organisation and therefore recognizing the value of informal arrangements and how integrating them within formal structures can help organizations to navigate challenges and harness diverse perspectives for better decision-making.

The author goes further to investigate the influencing factor for the decision-making and problem-solving style adopted by the Firm and according to the author, it is underscored by the prevalent leadership style within the Firm. The Firm operates the coaching style of leadership with the principle of distributed responsibility because it enhances performance and effectiveness by leveraging the different strengths of team members. This is because the different strengths and abilities of each team member have been developed by the coaching leader who takes time to identify the strength of his team members and nurture these strengths to achieve the growth of the team. The idea is that everybody (from the most junior to the most senior) has responsibilities, although at different levels and with the necessary guidance.

According to the author, the Firm's approach to solving problems and making decisions open conversation channel such that employees would be able to come forward with their problems to improve their skills and the team leaders provide guidance, and challenging tasks to prepare them for the future. This helps employees to understand their roles in the organization and how they will contribute to its mission statement, goals, and objectives. Also, the process will help employees to believe that leaders and managers will improve their skills, leading to enhanced performance and productivity levels which will, in turn, give employees satisfaction and positively affect the work environment.

However, for the fact that most times, the best decisions are gotten as a result of maturity and longstanding experience, if the process of decision-making and problem solving adopted by the Firm is not properly managed, it could occasionally end up as cheerleading thereby leading to mistakes.

Also, the process requires much more effort because it focuses on the growth of each team member individually. In addition, the Process requires team members to be open and willing to work with the leader because lack of such commitment may mean that the team is set up to fail.

Lastly, based on the analysis of the pros and cons done by the author in the Work, he presented certain recommendations for the effective implementation of this process of decision-making and problem-solving.

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