

Clarity, Communication, and Feedback – Successfully Managing Junior Lawyers

By Sara Brooke Littauer

Good managers create an environment where junior attorneys want to do their best work, feel supported, and have opportunities for growth and development. This allows you to deliver the highest-quality work product to your clients. However, micromanagement or too much supervision can backfire.

New partners often struggle with the managerial role. You can put yourself on the right track by providing *clarity* on assignments, *communicating* effectively, and offering constructive *feedback* on a regular basis to the attorneys you are supervising, regardless of the assignment.

Clarity is paramount

Before delegating an assignment, think about the following:

“Who” – What is the individual’s experience, availability, and working style?

“Why” – What is the assignment, who is the client, and what are you trying to accomplish?

“What” – What form should the work product take, how will it be used, and what is the budget?

“How” – What resources are available and what are the potential challenges?

“When” – What is the deadline, and at what stage(s) should the attorney check in with you?

Open communication is key

Once you have provided clarity, you must keep open communication to complete an assignment properly. Avoid surprises. If something comes up, such as a deadline change or a development in the case that will affect the assignment, keep your team informed. Make it a rule to be accessible and responsive. Being responsive will only help move the assignment along.

Providing feedback ensures the right result

Finally, providing regular feedback on the assignment and an individual’s progress ensures that you reach the result you and the client expect. It also allows the junior associate to become invested in the work and the client. Feedback should be concrete, specific, and constructive. Remember: The “style” with which you communicate the feedback is just as important as its substance.

Clarity, communication, and feedback will help junior lawyers improve their skills, feel accountable, and thrive in the work environment you have created. As a young partner, having associates who feel this way will save you time and energy in the editing process and help ensure that you deliver top-quality work product to your clients.

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