LAWYERS AS MANAGERS
LAWYERS AS MANAGERS
How to Be a Champion for Your Firm and Employees

Andrew Elowitt and Marcia Watson Wasserman
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Andrew Elowitt, JD, MBA, PCC, worked for over 20 years both in law firms and as the head of a corporate legal department before becoming a practice management consultant and professional certified coach. He is the Managing Director of New Actions LLC, a firm that specializes in talent, strategy, and leadership development for law firms, businesses, and government agencies.

His work focuses on the people side of legal practice: how lawyers manage, lead, thrive, change, and find satisfaction. He is regarded as an expert on the use of coaching and emotional, social, and conversational intelligences in leading and managing legal organizations of all sizes.

Andrew is a Fellow in the College of Law Practice Management, an International Coach Federation Professional Certified Coach, Vice Chair of the ABA Law Practice Division Publications Board, and founding member of its Lawyer Leadership and Management Board.

Andrew is regularly invited to conduct workshops and retreats for his clients and present programs to bar associations. He is the author of numerous books and articles.

**Marcia Watson Wasserman**

A seasoned legal management professional of more than 25 years, Marcia Watson Wasserman, Founder and President of Comprehensive Management Solutions, Inc., provides “C.O.O. To Go”™ services to boutique and mid-sized law firms. Her expertise includes operational management reviews, management development and training, succession planning, strategic planning, retreat facilitation, cash flow projections and financial management reports, recruitment, compensation and benefits administration, development of employee handbooks and job descriptions, business formations, and relocations.

As a thought leader, Marcia leads multiple monthly Managing Partners’ Roundtables focused on elevating the legal management discussion and sharing best practices. She serves as an Associate Editor and on the editorial board of *Law Practice* magazine and is also a member of the Law Practice Division’s Publications Board. Marcia frequently presents on law practice management topics at local, regional, and national conferences, and her writings can be found in leading legal publications. Marcia’s efforts have garnered the recognition of her peers as she is a Fellow in the College of Law Practice Management.

Prior to consulting, Marcia served as Chief Operating Officer and Executive Director at several law firms—both local and national—including an AmLaw 200 firm
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

From Andrew Elowitt

I am very grateful for the assistance and support I have received in the writing of this book. Many people have generously shared their time, knowledge, and expertise with me. This book is all the better for their contributions. First and foremost among them is my coauthor, Marcia Watson Wasserman. Her extensive experience in law firm management and consulting ensured that our ideas and advice were not only sound but also practical. Her diligence and tenacity made our collaboration a pleasure. I’d like to also thank our colleagues on the ABA Law Practice Division’s Publications Board (Wendy Werner and Tom Mighell) and our editors at Lachina (Jenni Claydon and Molly Montanaro) for their always helpful feedback and support.

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and collaborations have helped me immeasurably in bringing the best practices of leadership and management to the legal community and the writing of this book.

A special thank you to my clients who have trusted me with their firms, businesses, and careers. Our work together has validated and refined the skills, tools, and models contained in this book. It has been a joy to see your growth and success.

On a personal note, I’d like to thank my wife Gisele for her care and support, and for reminding me from time to time that writer’s block is temporary and should not be confused with existential angst. And to my daughter Claire, a Millennial who has begun managing, for our conversations about the best ways to organize, motivate, and hold people accountable . . . even when they don’t want to be.

I dedicate this book to the memory of my parents, Norman and Ruth Elowitt, who in their quiet and unpretentious way personified basic human decency. From them, I learned that if your head and heart are in the right place, it’s really not all that difficult to treat people with dignity and respect regardless of their race, class, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. My father, a child of poor immigrants, became a very successful entrepreneur and executive. He taught me that the best managers are thoughtful, big-hearted, and remember to read the footnotes on financial statements. My mother (quoting Eleanor Roosevelt) often reminded me that it’s better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. I hope this book sheds a great deal of light.
From Marcia Watson Wasserman

I dedicate this writing effort to my husband Charles Wasserman, Ph.D., for his constant nurturing support, encouragement, and love. Thanks to our Australian Shepherds Blossom and Coco, who sat beside me through hours of writing, editing, and proofing and herded me away for play time when they felt I needed a break. A very special thank you to Andrew Elowitt, who suggested we go on the journey of writing this book together, for his friendship and invaluable contributions to the book, and to his wife Gisele for her patience and support for the many hours Andrew spent working on it. Without the following people this book could not be in your hands: Wendy Werner, for her patience in reading our drafts and challenging us to take the book farther; Tom Mighell, for his feedback; Jenni Claydon and Molly Montanaro of Lachina, who have made working on the book a pleasure; Mark Goulston, M.D.; Grover Cleveland; Karen Gabler; Jonathan Fitzgarrald; and Jennifer Guirl and Kelli Dunaway, for their contributions to this book. Finally, I acknowledge all the lawyers who have challenged, motivated, and inspired me over my career. This book is for all of you.
FOREWORD

by Mark Goulston

My good friend, the late leadership guru and best-selling author Warren Bennis, was fond of saying that managing people is like herding cats. To the best of my knowledge, Warren never considered how much more challenging that would be if a lot of those cats had law degrees.

I enjoy frequent opportunities to speak with groups of lawyers, and I often begin those talks by saying, “I know a single word that causes you more problems than nearly any other word in your practice, in your career, and possibly in your life. Do you want to know what it is?” Priding themselves on being discerning, and skeptical about such a seemingly audacious but foolhardy challenge, they say, “Yes,” but are no doubt thinking to themselves, “Okay, Dr. Mark, this had better be good or else you’re starting with one big strike against you.”

I then reply, “That word is ‘p-e-o-p-l-e.’” At that point nearly everyone in the audience laughs or groans. I then go on to explain that the word “people” often reminds them of those 20 percent of their colleagues and employees who make up 80 percent of the headaches (it’s actually more like 10 percent and 90 percent). And the sad thing is that too often thinking about and dealing with those few high-maintenance people will cause them to overlook and
underappreciate the vast majority of great people who work for and with them.

At times, even managing great colleagues and employees can be a challenge for lawyers. Although lawyers are excellent problem solvers, too often that talent doesn’t extend to dealing with management problems and problem people. Even with loads of intelligence and determination, lawyers often struggle when it comes to motivating, developing, and holding their people accountable. Which leads me to this much-needed and wonderful book written by two nationally recognized practice management consultants and business coaches, Andrew Elowitt and Marcia Watson Wasserman. Given Andrew’s prior career as a lawyer and his current practice that focuses on developing people in law firms, and Marcia’s prior experience managing law firms and her current consulting practice devoted to legal management best practices, they are uniquely qualified to write and speak about how lawyers can become champion managers.

I’m sure most of you have heard the old proverb, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” In reality and practice, this proverb has it slightly backwards. As important as resolve and perseverance can be in finding a way to solve problems, it’s frequently more a matter of: “Where there’s a way, you will find the will to do it.” Or, in other words, once you know how to approach and solve a problem, it’s much easier to find the motivation and backbone to tackle it. You need look no further than Lawyers as Managers to find that way, and once you understand its approach to people management in law firms, your motivation and backbone will surely follow.
Information on the way to manage people in law firms has been sorely lacking. That is—up until now. *Lawyers as Managers* fills the gap and gives lawyers everything they want and need to know about managing people that they never learned in law school. It is not just a book to help you deal with the challenging people in your law firm—it is a primer, guide, and road map all in one on how to empower, motivate, inspire, and bring out the best of everyone in your law firm . . . including you!

And therein lies a great opportunity. How well or poorly you manage the people in your law firm will determine how successful, effective, and well respected you are. Manage well and people will feel it’s an honor and privilege to work at your firm under your supervision. Do it poorly and they’ll be sending out their resumes to go elsewhere.

Mark Goulston, M.D., Co-Founder, Heartfelt Leadership and author of “Just Listen”: Discover the Secret to Getting Through to Absolutely Anyone, Talking to Crazy: How to Deal with the Irrational and Impossible People in Your Life, and Get Out of Your Own Way at Work . . . and Help Others Do the Same: Conquering Self-Defeating Behavior on the Job.
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