

Leading the legal way

Former Browne Jacobson Managing Partner turned coach, [Iain Blatherwick](#) briefly outlines the pressures and responsibilities that come with leading a successful law firm and highlights the importance of why mental wellbeing should be high on every law firm leader's personal agenda.

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Law firm leaders and leaders in general often feel pressure to have a calm, reassuring, determined presence – regardless of how they may actually feel, meaning they do not take enough time to look out for themselves or ensure they have the right team around them for mutual support.

With the profile and influence to have positive and negative impact on those around them, it is essential that leaders retain the energy and passion needed for the role. No-one wants to see a leader looking 'frazzled', a recent high-profile incident springs to mind where the Chair of a well-known UK business had to backtrack on controversial comments he made around the way people in the firm were reacting to the impacts that the Pandemic had brought. These would have been said partly through pressure, frustrations and exhaustion, and no doubt later regretted.

It is important that leaders take time to step back from the day to day demands of their role and achieve a better balance between those tasks which are enjoyable, suit their skill set and give energy and those which drain, but simply have to be done.

Mental wellbeing is undoubtedly high on many businesses' agenda in 2021 with various mental health initiatives to support their people but what is in place for legal leaders and leaders in general when the going gets tough? Is there still a taboo around leaders taking up on these initiatives themselves? It is progress that we are seeing a shift from the somewhat archaic heroic leader model, where weaknesses should be hidden, to one where leaders can be more open about their own challenges. A [CBI report](#) on mental health in business post-Pandemic suggests that if businesses want to encourage an open culture or a safe space for its people to share and seek support then leaders should lead the way in being more transparent about their own struggles.

Sometimes a leader can feel that all the responsibility ultimately rests on their shoulders, but in order for a legal business to thrive, a great leadership team will be in place who are equally passionate about the organisation, will happily share that burden and will be shoulder to shoulder in helping deal with all challenges a business faces. In short, alongside every good leader is a strong leadership team and both need to support each other through the tough times that they are likely to face over the next few years without worrying about who will get the credit.

Iain Blatherwick spent 11 years successfully leading law firm Browne Jacobson during a period of unprecedented growth and key expansion. Since stepping down from the managing partner role, Iain has completed the Academy of Executive Coaching's (AOEC) practitioner Diploma Programme in executive coaching and is accredited by the European Mentoring & Coaching Council (EMCC). He recently launched [Space + Time](#), an executive coaching programme aimed at c-suite level business leaders which offers support in horizon scanning and key decision making.

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