

## Why Technology Fails in Law Firms

YVONNE CHOI, Founder, Superdope Legal Consulting

**A** law firm invests in a new practice management system. Leadership announces the rollout. IT runs a training session. The platform goes live as scheduled.



Cut to six months later and only half of the lawyers are using the new system, while the rest keep working as they always have. The holdouts continue logging time via the old system, saving documents to their desktop, and managing client matters as before.

The new system is live, but adoption is not.

Research on organizational change shows that when change management is properly applied, 88% of projects meet or exceed their objectives. With poor change management, that number plummets to 13%.<sup>1</sup> That is a seven-fold difference in outcome, driven not by the technology, but by how well the people side of the change was managed.

# bclma

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#### LOOKING FOR A VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY?

The TOPICS Editorial Committee welcomes new volunteers to help us connect with association members through our informative newsletter! Our fun and collaborative group seeks BCLMA members to suggest ideas and help source thought-provoking articles that will benefit all subsections.

We meet formally at four lunch-hour planning meetings per year (lunch provided) to plan the next edition. We also host meetings virtually for volunteers who live and work in the valley, the interior, on the island or the coast! Don't miss this rewarding opportunity to build valuable relationships, and contribute to the BCLMA and to our legal community across the province.

No business writing skills required – just your enthusiasm!

Contact Committee Chair Heather Orchison at [general@bclma.org](mailto:general@bclma.org) if you have any questions, need additional information, or feel ready to join!

#### Who We Are

Founded in 1972, the BCLMA is a non-profit organization with more than 600 members from 190 law firms across BC. The BCLMA's goal is to provide educational and networking opportunities, enhance skills as legal administrators and managers, and provide professional and personal benefits to its registrants.

#### Member Services

The BCLMA provides opportunities to network with other law firm administrators and managers at annual spring and winter socials, and monthly subsection meetings. We host a large conference every other year.

#### Newsletter Services

TOPICS is a public newsletter. Contact the Editorial Committee to provide comments on articles, to offer suggestions for articles in future issues, or to augment the circulation list. We welcome your feedback! Please send comments to [general@bclma.org](mailto:general@bclma.org).

#### Submissions

Please contact Heather Orchison at [general@bclma.org](mailto:general@bclma.org) if you have an article or story idea you would like to submit. Please note that our prescribed article length is 1000 words. All submissions will be subject to review by the editorial board.

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## HOW TECHNOLOGY MOST COMMONLY FAILS IN LAW FIRMS

The implementation of new technology can fail for a variety of reasons.

### 1. LEADERSHIP ABANDONMENT

*A managing partner champions the purchase, approves the budget, and sends the announcement email. The project is then handed to IT and Operations, and leadership moves on to other priorities.*

In a firm where seniority sets the tone, this is fatal. Active and visible sponsorship has been identified as the single greatest contributor to change success.<sup>2</sup> When leadership does not visibly and consistently use and promote the new system, a clear message is sent: this change is not actually a priority. Once that message takes hold, recovering momentum is neither quick nor inexpensive.

### 2. TRAINING AS A CHECKBOX

*The rollout includes one lunch-and-learn, a PDF guide, and a helpdesk email.*

Knowing how to use a system and being able to use it confidently under pressure are two distinct skillsets. A single training session concurrent with go-live, delivered

when people are most overwhelmed, with no differentiation between a 20-year seasoned partner and a junior associate, delivers neither.

### 3. THE NEGLECTED MIDDLE

*Positioned between leadership and junior staff is a layer of influential people – practice group leaders, senior associates, legal assistants, and paralegals – who are not obstructing the change but also not adopting it.*

This group is not resistant by nature. Rather, nobody has made a compelling case to them, specifically, as to why the technology will improve their workflow and day-to-day experience.

However, when this neglected group is engaged early and meaningfully, it becomes the firm's most powerful change network. In a small firm, one influential paralegal's scepticism or enthusiasm can shape the entire team's response. In a larger firm, engaged practice group leaders can carry change through their teams far more effectively than any top-down mandate.

The neglected middle is either your greatest obstacle or your greatest asset.



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## CHANGE IS NOT CHEAP

Implementing new technology interrupts workflows, and interrupted workflows affect billable time. The cost is real and should not be minimized. The expectation – and the goal – is that the short-term cost pays for itself through improved systems and long-term efficiency.

However, failed change costs significantly more. Prolonged implementation. Teams reverting mid-rollout. Firms paying for two platforms while the transition stalls. These are not hypothetical risks. They are common outcomes when the people side of change is underfunded or overlooked.

## WHAT SUCCESSFUL FIRMS DO DIFFERENTLY

### 1. START WITH PEOPLE

The most important question in any rollout? It's not: "When do we go-live?" It's: "Where is each person starting from?"

A managing partner and legal assistant who endured previous failed rollouts are not starting from the same place as a newly articulated associate encountering the firm's systems for the first time.

Start by mapping your stakeholders. Identify where each group is starting from, what might drive their resistance, and what will move them forward. Build differentiated pathways to the same future state. The most effective change management frameworks treat assessment of organizational readiness as a prerequisite – not an afterthought.

### 2. COMMUNICATE THE 'WHY'

Stakeholders need to understand the rationale for change and what it means for them specifically. The 'why' must be repeated: before go-live when scepticism threatens buy-in, during the rollout when client demands tempt reversion, and after go-live when old habits beckon.

### 3. PROPERLY DEFINE SUCCESS

Success is actually the day on which behaviour has changed. This requires measuring speed of adoption, as well as quantity and quality of adoption. Without this broader definition of success, the first sign of trouble risks being misinterpreted as an anomaly rather than a signal of more trouble ahead.

### 4. VISIBLE AND SUSTAINED COMMITMENT FROM

## LEADERSHIP

Not simply a sign-off; rather, visible participation: a managing partner in the training session alongside their team; a practice group leader using the new system in their next meeting without complaint. In a firm where senior behaviour sets the tone for everyone else, visible and sustained commitment from leadership is the single highest-leverage activity available during any rollout.

### 5. PLAN FOR AND COMMUNICATE THE 'DIP'

There is a productivity dip during every implementation. Firms that plan for this communicate it honestly and in advance: "The first few weeks will feel slower. This is expected. Here is what support looks like, and here is who to contact."

Research shows that projects with excellent change management are nearly five times more likely to stay on or ahead of schedule than those with poor change management.<sup>3</sup> Most of those delays are not technical. They stem from unaddressed resistance and insufficient desire to change – teams reverting to old habits at the first sign of friction because nobody told them the friction was normal. That reversion is far less likely when people are warned and equipped with the support to push through it.

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

The firms that succeed invest as seriously in understanding and supporting their people as they did in selecting the new technology. Change in a firm is hard, but the reasons it fails are predictable, and what is predictable is preventable.

The gap is not the software. It is not the people. It is the absence of a plan to bring them along.



Yvonne Choi founded Superdope Legal Consulting to do one thing well: help law firms get change right. She partners with firm leadership to build the people-side strategies that technology (and other) implementations too often skip. If you want to chat change, get in touch at [yvonne@superdope.legal](mailto:yvonne@superdope.legal)

1 Prosci, "The Correlation Between Change Management and Project Success," Prosci Blog, <https://www.prosci.com/blog/the-correlation-between-change-management-and-project-success>.

2 Prosci, "Primary Sponsor's Role and Importance," Prosci Blog, <https://www.prosci.com/blog/primary-sponsors-role-and-importance>

3 Prosci, "The Correlation Between Change Management and Project Success," Prosci Blog, <https://www.prosci.com/blog/the-correlation-between-change-management-and-project-success>.

# MEMBER SNAPSHOT

JONATHAN HO



Q  
&A

#### **Describe your current role.**

As Director of Finance at Synergy Business Lawyers LLP, I have responsibility for all accounting, treasury-related functions and backup to HR, IT, and office-related matters.

#### **What do you enjoy the most about your role?**

A variety of roles are available to me to shape my professional growth in a mid-size firm.

#### **What is the greatest value you receive from the BCLMA?**

Educational support provided from the organization through seminars, updates and networking with colleagues.

#### **What advice would you give to young professionals developing their legal career?**

Expand your knowledge base and network with your industry colleagues and others in non-legal fields to develop your professional judgment and experience.

#### **Which title would describe your legal career?**

*The Road Less Travelled*

#### **My dream vacation:**

A European cities tour to see and experience all the rich history of the world.

#### **My favourite quote or joke:**

Always be grateful for what you have – not what you don't have.

#### **My favourite restaurant – anywhere:**

Hawksworth, Rosewood Hotel Georgia in Vancouver.

#### **In my spare time, I like to:**

Prepare and cook delicious cuisine.

#### **A title to describe my life:**

Same as my legal career! *The Road Less Travelled*



# Resignation? Or dismissal?

**PRESTON PARSONS**, Partner, Overholt Law LLP

**A** resignation letter is not always enough to establish that an employee has actually resigned. In a recent decision, the Supreme Court of British Columbia (BCSC) reinforced an important lesson for employers: **a resignation must be voluntary, clear, and informed.**<sup>1</sup>

While both resignation and dismissal end the employment relationship, the distinction matters. An employer's legal obligations differ significantly depending on how the relationship ends.

In the case of a dismissal, employers are required under BC's *Employment Standards Act* to provide notice of termination or pay in lieu of notice.<sup>2</sup>

If a resignation is later found to be invalid, what an employer believed was a voluntary departure may instead be treated as a dismissal – potentially exposing the organization to liability.

## **RESIGNATION LETTERS ALONE CAN BE INSUFFICIENT**

This issue of distinction arose in a case involving a 44-year-old server with 6.5 years of service at Black + Blue Restaurant in downtown Vancouver. He requested six weeks off as a leave of absence for a once-in-a-lifetime vacation, which was approved. Months later though, while on his way to the airport, he stopped by the restaurant to collect outstanding gratuities. Before receiving them, his manager asked him to

sign an exit form and resign. (Notably, this was a different manager than the one who previously approved his leave, as his former manager was no longer with Black + Blue.)

The server objected but was told resignation was required under company policy. When he asked whether he would have a job upon returning from vacation, he was assured that he would be reinstated. Though he ultimately signed the form, the BCSC concluded that this did not amount to a valid resignation.

This decision is consistent with earlier rulings. In one such ruling, a December 2025 case, a store clerk submitted a resignation letter, but the Court found she was dismissed.<sup>3</sup> It was discovered that the letter was written under pressure after her employer instructed her to write a resignation letter in his office. The employer dictated the contents of the letter and continued to pressure her while she was visibly distressed.

These two cases highlight a key principle: a signed resignation letter is not determinative if it was obtained through pressure, confusion, or emotional distress.

## SO, WHAT CONSTITUTES A VALID RESIGNATION?

A legally effective resignation requires two elements:

1. Clear intent by the employee to resign; and
2. Words or conduct that would lead a reasonable employer to conclude the employee intended to resign.

Courts assess both the employee's state of mind and the surrounding circumstances. This includes examining the employee's conduct before and after the alleged resignation.

In the case of the server, the Court found no intention to resign since the employee requested leave for a vacation and sought confirmation that he would return to work afterward. This conduct was not consistent with an intention to end the employment relationship. In fact, nothing about the server's behaviour before or after his leave indicated any intent to no longer be employed at the restaurant.

Similarly, in the case of the store clerk, the clerk's continued efforts to perform her job – even when her boss took away her keys – undermined any suggestion that she genuinely intended to resign.

Our Courts may also find a resignation to be invalid where:

- » the employee was highly emotional or distressed;
- » the employer was already contemplating termination; or
- » the employer rushed to secure a resignation.

## HOW EMPLOYERS SHOULD HANDLE RESIGNATIONS

These decisions underscore the importance of handling resignations carefully and deliberately. Missteps, including trying to take advantage of an opportunity to try to coerce a resignation, can convert what appears to be a resignation into a dismissal, making it a costly mistake for an employer.



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(Continued from page 7)

Employers should:

1. Avoid pressuring employees to resign. A resignation must be voluntary.
2. Allow time for reflection. If an employee resigns in the heat of the moment, follow up after the employee has had an opportunity to calm down.
3. Seek clear written confirmation. Ensure the employee's intention is explicit and documented.
4. Delay administrative steps. Do not issue a Record of Employment or request the return of company property until the resignation has been clearly confirmed.

Handled properly, resignations can be straightforward.

*Preston wishes to give special thanks to Ashley Ng, articling student, for her assistance with this article.*



Preston Parsons is a partner at Overholt Law, practicing in the areas of employment and labour relations, human rights, and privacy law. Overholt Law is a boutique employment and labour relations firm located in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia. For more information regarding Overholt Law, please visit [overholtlawyers.com](http://overholtlawyers.com)

1 DeCarlo v. 0894546 B.C. Ltd. (Black + Blue), 2026 BCSC 684

2 Employment Standards Act, RSBC 1996, c 113, s 63.

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# MEMBER SNAPSHOT

STACEY POOLE



Q  
&A

#### **Describe your current role.**

My role as Director of Team Development at First Peoples Law LLP covers all aspects of HR, including recruitment, performance management, and productivity. I also oversee our student program, as well as develop and implement policies as the firm's needs evolve. Since much of my work involves problem solving, I collaborate with partners and help ensure the firm operates smoothly from a people perspective.

#### **What do you enjoy the most about your role?**

Turning big ideas into real action — planning, working closely with my team, and seeing positive results come together.

#### **What is the greatest value you receive from the BCLMA?**

Opportunities to connect with peers in similar roles, particularly in small to mid-sized firms.

#### **What advice would you give to young professionals developing their legal career?**

Prioritize building genuine relationships. You will learn so much by talking to people.

#### **A book title to describe my legal career:**

*The Long Game*

#### **My dream vacation:**

Italy, including a weeklong mountain biking tour in the Dolomites followed by a week of eating gelato at the beach.

#### **My guest list to my exclusive dinner party includes:**

A bunch of my girlfriends, Amy Poehler, Michelle Obama and Dolly Parton.

#### **My favourite BC day trip location:**

Squamish. A day in the mountains and a dip in the lake.

#### **One thing about me that might surprise you:**

I got my job at First Peoples Law after responding to an ad on Craigslist. It was 2013 and a 4-person operation at the time.

#### **A movie title or song title to describe my life:**

*Footloose*



# Brave New World



## CELEBRATING OUR BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

The BCLMA's 2026 Conference & Marketplace brought together law firm leaders for two impactful days focused on the theme of *Thriving in a New World*. Against a backdrop of rapid change in the legal industry, the conference delivered practical insight, fresh perspectives, and meaningful connection – equipping attendees with strategies to adapt, innovate, and lead with confidence while prioritizing well-being and culture.

### DAY 1

#### OPENING KEYNOTE – THE HIGH PERFORMER'S EDGE

Laura Desveaux, PhD, CPCC, ACC

This opening session challenged attendees to rethink how high-performance is created. The keynote focused on mindset shifts, avoiding common cognitive traps, and intentionally shaping environments that support smarter decision-making, as well as sustained and strategic success.

#### SESSION 1 – LEADERSHIP, ETHICS & COMPLIANCE IN THE MODERN LAW FIRM | Dimple Kainth, Lawyer & Consultant, CEO of Satya Law & Savya Consulting

This breakout session explored key compliance risks and responsibilities in the modern law firm. Participants learned about responding to ethical issues, supporting hybrid and multigenerational teams, aligning culture and inclusion with professional conduct rules, and proactively preventing complaints and compliance-related risk.



#### SESSION 2 – CULTURE BY DESIGN: A STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE FOR MOTIVATION, RETENTION & REDUCING RISK | Deborah Fox, Leadership Coach & Culture Strategist, Founder of Evolve Leadership Development

This breakout session highlighted how intentional workplace culture drives performance, engagement, and risk reduction. Attendees gained practical strategies to proactively design culture, motivate and retain teams beyond compensation, spot early warning signs of burnout, and use appreciation to build loyalty.

**SESSION 3 – FLOURISHING UNDER PRESSURE: BRAIN-ALIGNED LEADERSHIP FOR UNCERTAIN TIMES** | Allison Wolf, Certified Executive Coach, Founder of The Lawyer Coach & The Flourishing Law Centre

This breakout session explored how neuroscience-informed leadership can improve focus, collaboration, and resilience during rapid change. Attendees learned practical strategies to reduce threat responses, foster psychological safety, and boost team motivation – helping people perform at their best even under pressure.

**MODERATED PANEL DISCUSSION – INTEGRATING AI TO ELEVATE THE FUTURE OF WORK** | **MODERATOR:** Sandra Lowe, COO, JML

**PANELLISTS:** Nathan Lee, Principal Consultant at ORIGIN; Allison Wolf; Dimple Kainth

The moderated panel explored the integration of AI in law firms, offering practical insight into where to start and how to implement AI effectively. Panellists shared real-world examples of how firms are operationalizing AI, discussed aligning innovation with firm goals, and highlighted key ethical considerations.



**MARKETPLACE**

With 34 enthusiastic exhibitors, delegates had the opportunity to meet vendors one-on-one to learn more about products and services relevant to the legal industry. We appreciate all the amazing vendors and sponsors!

**DAY 2**

The second day began with the Annual General Meeting. **See page 15 of this TOPICS edition** for the list of new board members!

Delegates then attended alternate breakout sessions offered on Day 1.

**CLOSING KEYNOTE – FROM CHAOS TO CLARITY: LEADERSHIP WITH CONFIDENCE IN A CHANGING LEGAL LANDSCAPE** | Alexandra Phizicky, PCC, CEC

This closing keynote focused on leading with clarity and confidence amid constant change. Attendees gained practical insights on staying grounded under pressure, shifting from reactive to intentional leadership, and helping teams remain focused and adaptable even when uncertainty is the norm.



Overall, the conference left attendees with renewed energy, actionable tools, a strengthened sense of community, and ready to lead confidently through the legal profession’s shifting landscape.

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- » Appara for sponsoring the lanyards
- » Wright CPA for sponsoring the Thrive Wright cocktail and mocktail at the Marketplace

## THANK YOU TO OUR CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

The Conference Committee worked for more than a year to bring together a successful 2026 Conference & Marketplace. Please thank these exceptional individuals for their contributions and dedication the next time you see them!

- » Janiene Chand, Chair
- » Ismahan Ali
- » Kalynda Hampshire
- » Jane Kennedy
- » Carlos Mascco
- » Heather Orchison
- » Karen Vandervoort



## LAST BUT NOT LEAST – THANK YOU DELEGATES!

Finally, we thank everyone who traveled from near and far to attend! Your participation makes every event successful and special.





## SO LONG, JANE

**In the winter of 2006, the BCLMA welcomed Jane Kennedy.**

Having recognized the need for expert and dedicated support with a growing list of governance activities, working groups, and events committees, the Board hired Jane as an Executive Assistant. As a former Account Executive with Tourism Vancouver and Director of Catering at the Sutton Place Hotel, Jane felt genuinely excited to work with a non-profit organization, while building a new position from the ground up. Her initial responsibilities included Member Liaison, Vendor Relationships Manager, and Events Co-ordinator. Eventually, she joined the TOPICS Editorial Committee and had major roles in every BCLMA conference since 2007.

Fast-forward 20 years, and we all know Jane as a steady and trusted presence within the association. She has brought exceptional organization, professionalism, and care to every aspect of her work — often behind the scenes, but always at the centre of what made our member experience so strong.

Leveraging her background in hospitality, Jane understood instinctively that details matter and that people remember how they are treated. Whether supporting a Board meeting, coordinating an event, or responding to a member request, she approached every interaction with low self-interest and an unwavering commitment to high-quality service.

“Jane and I worked together closely for eight years when I was on the Board. She was a relentless taskmaster and did whatever she could to help us meet our deadlines. Most people know she is a phenomenal organizer, especially when it comes to events! And, she excelled in welcoming new members. Jane is one of my favourite people.”

– Lorraine Burchynsky, retired BCLMA member

What made Jane extra-special was that she never simply “assisted.” She collaborated. Thoughtful and insightful, she consistently brought ideas forward to improve processes, strengthen member experiences, and support the work of the association.

“How lucky was I that I got to work with Jane for seven years?! I'm so grateful that I had the opportunity to work alongside her. Jane brings such a positive energy to everything she does. Her generosity, and compassion are much appreciated. The BCLMA is Jane's baby, and we will do our very best to look after it for her.”

– Heather Orchison, Administrative Assistant, Membership Services & TOPICS Committee Chair

If you know Jane well, you know she never sought the spotlight! Nonetheless, it's important that we pause to recognize the tremendous contributions she has made over the past two decades. She has been a pillar of this association, and her professionalism, dedication and kind-heartedness will leave a lasting legacy.

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**Says Jane:** “The BCLMA has simply been the best client! I've met incredible people and worked with friendly and supportive sponsors. I especially enjoyed implementing fun ways for the members to win prizes, from balloon popping and fishing for prizes, to the Scratch & Win and Spin the Wheel games, to the bottle board and Santa's stockings. Simply unforgettable.”

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Thank you for everything, Jane. You will be truly missed. Enjoy retirement!

# Save the Date

## **BCLMA Educational**

Date: Thursday, October 15, 2026

Time: 11:45 am - 1:30 pm

Location: Terminal City Club

## **BCLMA Annual Winter Social**

Date: Thursday, November 19, 2026

Time: 5:15 pm - 9:00 pm

Location: Fairmont Waterfront Hotel

## **Important Reminder:**

Please remember to take part in the BCLMA Compensation & Benefits Survey and Charge Out Rates Survey in July.

Visit [bclma.org](http://bclma.org) for more information and to register for events.



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# 2026/27 BCLMA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Legal Management Association was held on Friday, May 1 at the Vancouver Convention Centre East.

## We are pleased to introduce the 2026/27 Board of Directors:

**Janiene Chand, President**  
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Allen / McMillan Litigation Counsel

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**Contact information can be found here**  
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### About us

Appara streamlines workflows! Specifically, we help legal teams eliminate tedious work by reducing manual effort, errors, and context switching. The result is faster delivery, better organization, and more time focused on high-value legal work.

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- For in-house teams: Centralize corporate memory, manage entities, track mandates, and ensure compliance with a single source of truth.

### What's new

In 2025, we launched our Estate Administration solution, becoming the first truly all-in-one platform for solicitors in BC. In 2026, we introduced 'Appara In-House Solutions' to bring the same efficiency, automation, and legal-grade workflows to corporate legal teams, enabling them to manage entities, documents, and governance seamlessly in one place.

### Our differentiator

Appara stands as a testament to the power of technology and community in transforming an industry. Hence, we move forward with a clear commitment: to create an ecosystem that meets the needs of today's modern legal professionals – and shapes the legal industry of tomorrow.

### What our clients say

Our customers consistently describe their experience as easy, happy, and profoundly timesaving. Just like our comprehensive, all-in-one platform, which seamlessly connects multiple practice areas and domains, our commitment to our customers covers all the bases.

### We support the BCLMA because

... it strengthens the legal community through education, collaboration, and networking. It gathers legal management leaders to share knowledge, build skills, and elevate professional standards across the industry, which aligns with our commitment to improving efficiency and supporting BC legal professionals in their growth.

### Our favourite BCLMA event, and why

The Summer Social! We love the opportunity to connect in a relaxed and informal setting, exchange ideas, and strengthen relationships.

### Coordinates

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# Build law firm cultures that motivate and retain people

ALLISON WOLF, The Lawyer Coach

Law firm leaders and management still wonder: *How do we motivate and retain our people in a profession that is inherently challenging?*

## LEVERAGE PILLARS OF COMPASS-CENTRED ACTION

The answer is in understanding how human beings actually work—at the level of the brain—and then designing our firm cultures accordingly. Today, we know a lot more about what drives motivation, engagement, and performance. Insights from neuroscience, psychology, and positive organizational research provide a clearer picture of why certain workplaces energize people while others slowly drain them.

The RECLAIM model is my effort to translate that research into something practical and usable for law firm leaders. The RECLAIM model draws on established research in neuroscience and positive psychology, including:

- » David Rock's SCARF® model of social motivation
- » Martin Seligman's PERMA framework of flourishing
- » Lisa Feldman Barrett's work on how emotions are constructed in the brain

At its core, RECLAIM is a brain-aligned approach to culture. Rather than focusing on the problems—burnout, disengagement, turnover—it **focuses on inputs**: the daily cues people receive through leadership behaviour, systems, policies, and communication that promote motivation and wellbeing in the workplace.

## WHY INPUTS MATTER MORE THAN OUTPUTS

Our brains are constantly scanning our internal and external environments. *Am I safe? Am I respected? Do I belong? Is this fair? Do I have some control? Is there meaning here?*

Based on those inputs, the brain makes predictions. From those predictions flow outputs: motivation or demotivation, engagement or withdrawal, confidence or anxiety.

When we think about culture through this lens, the work becomes clearer. We don't 'fix' motivation directly; rather, we mindfully integrate positive inputs that the brain interprets as rewarding (rather than threatening), and motivation follows.

## THE RECLAIM MODEL

The RECLAIM model identifies seven core inputs that (i) promote motivation and positive responses when they are present, and (ii) undermine them when they are absent.

### 1. RESPECT (RECOGNITION AND STATUS)

Respect is about acknowledging people's relative importance and contribution.

In practice, this can be very simple. For example:

- » Listening before directing
- » Acknowledging effort and progress (not just outcomes)
- » Inviting others to co-author, attend client meetings, or participate in events
- » Involving your people in decision-making processes
- » Keeping your people informed and updated on firm business that impacts them

Respect is communicated less through grand gestures and more through everyday interactions and proactive communication.

## 2. EQUITY (FAIRNESS)

Equity in the context of the RECLAIM model is about fair process, not identical treatment. We consider: *Who gets opportunities? Who attends conferences? Who works on high-profile files? Is compensation equitable?*

Equity improves dramatically when firms:

- » Use clear criteria for allocating opportunities
- » Develop processes for decision-making
- » Explain why decisions are made
- » Develop clear and equitable compensation systems
- » Review work allocation patterns over time

Fairness isn't just about outcomes; it's also about whether people understand the logic behind decisions.

## 3. CLARITY

Uncertainty causes anxiety, while clarity and predictability provide a sense of security. Clarity comes from:

- » Documented processes and expectations
- » Consistent communication
- » Explaining the 'why' behind decisions
- » Predictable systems for work, feedback, and advancement

As firms grow, so does the need for increased internal communication. In small firms, people are working closely together and “just know” how decisions are made or how things work but as firms grow this is no longer true.



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You cannot over-communicate in a growing firm. Ambiguity is cognitively expensive and anxiety-producing. Clear is kind.

#### 4. LEARNING, GROWTH, AND ACHIEVEMENT

Human beings naturally want to learn and improve. Clear pathways for learning and achievement spark motivation and satisfaction:

- » Asking people what skills they want to develop and providing corresponding support
- » Creating learning paths (not just billable targets)
- » Showing what progression looks like at different career stages
- » Providing clear pathways for advancement

This matters deeply for retention. Associates need to see where they are heading. Even in small firms, clarity about possible paths—specialization, leadership, client responsibility—makes a difference. This applies equally to support staff, who also need growth pathways to stay engaged.

#### 5. AUTONOMY

Micromanagement will cause people to disengage or leave. But when autonomy is present, motivation increases.

Autonomy is the sense of having some control over one's work and decisions. A helpful metaphor is the sandbox:

- » Clear boundaries (policies, standards, expectations) form the walls
- » Within them, people have freedom to decide how they work

Autonomy grows when people are trusted to run files, manage relationships, and make decisions with genuine support.

#### 6. INCLUSION, BELONGING, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Inclusion in the RECLAIM model is about knowing you belong—and that others have your back. Supportive workplace relationships naturally create security. You promote this sense of security when you:

- » Ask for input before giving answers
- » Respond neutrally to bad news or errors (without lapsing into sarcasm or sighs or shifts in tone)
- » Emphasize learning and talk openly about how competence develops over time
- » Focus on fixing problems (not assigning blame)
- » Provide feedback in the moment (not days or weeks later)
- » Protect mentoring time and keep mentoring conversations confidential

This is not “soft.” In legal work, early disclosure of errors is essential as is holding people accountable.

While fear-based cultures delay disclosure and increase risk, a sense of belonging accelerates learning and performance because it lowers threat responses in the brain and promotes resilience.

#### 7. MEANING AND CONTRIBUTION

People want to know their work matters. Meaning can come from:

- » A clear firm vision
- » Understanding how a file advances a client's goals
- » Seeing how individual roles contribute to something larger
- » Having the opportunity to create a vision and set professional goals, with support from the firm

Connect work to impact and celebrate progress along the way.

## USING RECLAIM IN PRACTICE

The RECLAIM model isn't meant to be overwhelming. Start with one cue (I recommend Clarity) and ask:

- » How have I experienced this positively or negatively in my career?
- » Where is this cue strong or weak in our firm today?

- » What's one system, process, or behaviour we could adjust?

The bottom line: Building motivating cultures isn't about perks and bonuses. It's about aligning how we lead, decide, and communicate with how human brains function. Frame your communication and act in ways that light up the brain up rather than shut it down to foster stronger collaboration, spiral up motivation, and ultimately achieve better results.



Allison Wolf is a senior coach and strategic advisor who has worked exclusively with lawyers from across North America for over 20 years. Allison helps lawyers develop flourishing legal practices and improve their satisfaction in both their professional and personal lives. Allison also works with law firm founders and leaders on growing profitable and sustainable legal businesses.

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*Thank you!*

Thank you to all the BCLMA delegates who stopped by our booth for an updated headshot.

It's always such a pleasure to see your smiling faces!

We truly appreciate your business, and your friendship.

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# WELCOME & KUDOS

## New Member Firms and their Representative

Camilla Lung **Aird Berlis LLP** Vancouver  
Kristina DiTomaso **Beck Robinson** Vancouver  
Odette Dempsey-Caputo **Community Legal Clinic Operating Society of BC** Kamloops

## New Representatives for Existing Member Firms

John Pater **Ascent Employment Law Corporation** Vancouver  
Pam Deleijer **Campbell Froh May & Rice LLP** Richmond  
Anne Marie Johnston **Hammerco Lawyers LLP** Vancouver  
Rose Carrera **Hira Rowan LLP** Vancouver  
Andrea Pantages **Lesperance Mendes** Vancouver  
Kirsten Whitley **McMillan LLP** Vancouver

## New Individual Members

Elisa Neilly **Blake Cassels & Graydon LLP** Vancouver

Ilana Schragar **Borden Ladner Gervais LLP** Vancouver  
Elyse Stacey **Borden Ladner Gervais LLP** Vancouver  
Tamara Mathew **Clark Wilson LLP** Vancouver  
Adria Kennedy **DWF** Vancouver  
Marissa Bauzon **Gowling WLG (Canada) LLP** Vancouver  
Stephanie Goldminc **Jamal Law Group** Vancouver  
Sarah Sloan **Lesperance Mendes** Vancouver  
Ross Dwhyte **Pushor Mitchell LLP** Vancouver  
Samantha Lidder **Singleton Urquhart Reynolds Vogel LLP** Vancouver  
Elizabeth Thors **Woodward and Company LLP** Victoria

## Name Change:

Race and Company LLP is now **Coast Mountain Law LLP** Whistler and Squamish



## Expands Access to the Admin Salary Survey

By popular demand, the Administrative Salary Survey will now be open to small- and medium-sized firms. Previously available only to firms with 30+ lawyers, the survey is conducted in late fall and covers more than 20 director-level and manager-level positions not included in the staff survey—roles such as CFO, CIO, and others.

The Firm Administrator position will move from the Staff Compensation & Benefits Survey to the Administrative Salary Survey while all other staff positions will remain in the Staff Compensation & Benefits Survey.

The expanded Administrative Salary Survey includes multiple filters—geographic region, firm size, years of experience, and number of direct reports—so firms can generate meaningful, tailored comparables. Large firms will still be able to refine results to match prior experience, while smaller firms will gain access to relevant benchmarks. The expansion will not impact the integrity of the data.

This survey is an essential tool for benchmarking cash and non-cash compensation. Firm representatives and HR should watch for the registration email this fall.

# BCLMA COMMUNITY AWARDS

This year, the BCLMA launched the biennial **BCLMA Community Awards** to recognize members who exemplify outstanding mentorship, teamwork, and community service!

## CATEGORIES

- » **The Guiding Light Award** — Recognizing those who illuminate the path for others through mentorship, integrity, and leadership.
- » **The Glue Award** — Honouring the colleagues who strengthen teams through reliability, kindness, and supportive everyday actions.
- » **The Giving Back Award** — Celebrating individuals who contribute meaningfully to both the legal and broader communities through service, advocacy, or volunteerism.

## WINNERS AND NOMINEES

BCLMA members were invited to nominate colleagues who demonstrate noticeable commitment in these categories of service, and we were delighted to receive numerous thoughtful nominations. The high calibre of nominees made the selection process especially difficult!

Now, we recognize all the nominees and extend our sincere thanks to their nominators who took their time to recognize their colleagues.

- » **Guiding Light Award** | **Winner: Catharine Rae** | Nominees: Parm Ahuja-Robertson, Judie Boroevich, Kanchan Dhahan, Chris Drinovz, Morgan Fowler, Dawn Halliday, Marni Hambleton, Rubyna Jinnah, Veronica MacInnis, Priscilla Martindale, Lilly Pollard, Sonja Simic, Heather Walker
- » **Glue Award** | **Winner: Trevor Chorney** | Nominees: Reena Cheema, Nancy Clarke, Leslie Green, Kimberly MacMillan, Catharine Rae
- » **Giving Back Award** | **Winner: Kathleen Brett** | Nominees: Rebecca Levi

Congratulations to all nominees and awards recipients for setting an inspiring example for all our members!



Award winners Kathleen Brett, Catharine Rae, and Trevor Chorney as well as Awards Program Co-Chairs, Directors Claire Immege and Priscilla Martindale.

# BCLMA Ask a Coach

## DEAR COACH:

*"Good news: I have just been promoted to my first management position! Bad news: I have never had manager training and I am now supposed to "manage" people who were my peers. Most days, I feel like I don't know what I am doing. Help! Signed, Need to figure this out fast!"*

This is a common scenario in law firms. You got promoted because you are great at what you do. Then, overnight, you went from being 'one of the team' to managing your former peers, in an environment where partner expectations can change fast. It's normal to feel unsteady!

I suggest you start here:

**(1) Anchor to your strengths.** Whenever we move into a "next level" of our career, it's normal to feel self-doubt and imposter syndrome. Now is the time to look for evidence of everything you already bring to the table.

If you are unsure of what your strengths are, turn to past performance evaluations and look for themes.

Or engage in your own 360-degree review process; ask trusted colleagues, across a variety of areas of work and life, a question like: "When I am at my best at work, what do you see me doing?"

Start a personal file to remind yourself of what and how you contribute. Some people call this a "brag book". It's helpful to refer to this document in moments of doubt.

**(2) Adapt your leadership style to each person (especially former peers).** Because you were promoted internally, you're not starting from zero – you start with history. While useful, it also means you can't manage everyone the same way. Someone brand new may need clear direction and context while a former peer may need more autonomy for you to remove bottlenecks and show that you respect their expertise.

Use a simple "work profile" approach: learn what motivates each person (people/ process/ results), their preferred communication and feedback loops, what frustrates them,

and what support looks like to them. The golden rule does not apply here; instead, treat people as they want to be treated.

**(3) Create a simple, high-impact communication rhythm.** One of the highest "return-on-effort" approaches a manager can take is to increase clarity and reduce uncertainty for the people on your team. That means clarifying role expectations, providing organizational context, defining what is/isn't a priority, and being transparent about how they are performing.

This does not need to require more meetings, but it does often require more intentionally structured ones. Consider the optimal communication rhythm that can help keep your team aligned. That might be a combination of weekly, monthly and quarterly touchpoints – either 1:1 or as a team, and can range from emails to dedicated meetings, to help everyone get and stay on the same page and reduce emergencies and escalations.

You will get off to a great start if you prioritize a few intentional practices that create clarity, earn trust, and make it easier for your team to do great work under pressure. Start small, stay consistent, and adjust as you learn what your team needs.

Warmly, Megan



Megan (Meegan) McAllister is a professional coach and leadership development facilitator and strategic workplace culture consultant, specializing in the legal industry and law firm management. She is on a mission to create a ripple effect of better workplaces, leaders, careers and lives. [meganmcallister.ca](http://meganmcallister.ca)

## Call for Submissions

Do you have an idea for an article that you think would benefit BCLMA members? Are you itching to put pen to paper (or more likely fingers to keyboard) or do you have an article already written that you'd like to share? We are always looking for submissions!

Please contact Heather Orchison at [general@bclma.org](mailto:general@bclma.org) if you have an article or story idea you would like to submit. Please note that our prescribed article length is 1000 words.

All submissions will be subject to review by the editorial board.

# THE SOUNDING BOARD

YOUR BCLMA.  
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Our community gathered to “thrive” at the BCLMA’s Conference & Marketplace this spring – a biennial event that always sparks meaningful conversations, fresh ideas, and new connections. Thank you to the conference committee, delegates, and sponsors for making it a success.

The Board hosted the Annual General Meeting on May 1st. We are happy to welcome Kathleen Brett and Natalie Leon as new Directors to the Board.

We wrapped up spring with our annual Summer Social at Tap & Barrel Bridges. Another fun evening with great food and

great company. Visit the [Events](#) page of our website to stay on top of all upcoming events.

After 20 years of dedicated service, Jane Kennedy has retired from the BCLMA.

Patricia Tait and Suzanne Sumera have joined Heather Orchison on the BCLMA administrative team.

Happy summer!



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## RECIPE

# Grilled Chicken Chickpea Salad



Recipe from [skinnytaste](https://www.skinnytaste.com)

**PREP TIME:** 5 minutes

### INGREDIENTS:

- 15 oz can of chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 4 oz grilled chicken, leftover breast from rotisserie, diced
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 2 mini cucumbers, chopped
- 2 small tomatoes, sliced
- 1/4 cup red onion
- Juice from 1 lemon
- 2 oz feta, crumbled
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/8 teaspoon dried oregano

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine chickpeas, chicken, cucumbers, tomato, and red onion with 1/2 lemon juice, 1/2 tablespoon olive oil, salt, and toss.

2. Divide onto plates and top with feta, dried oregano, remaining lemon juice, and remaining olive oil.

### VARIATIONS:

- Substitute chickpeas for canned white beans.
- Serve over mixed greens or chopped romaine.
- Use fresh herbs instead of dried.
- Add avocado or bell peppers.

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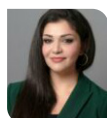


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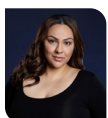


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