

## To Err Is Human

“I’ve learnt so much from my mistakes, I am thinking of making some more”

Goldie (musician)

Throughout my career, if I am honest, my best learning opportunities have come from my challenges and “mistakes”, when I have felt outside of my “comfort zone”. During these times I felt uncomfortable and sometimes alone and vulnerable. I also learnt a lot about myself and that has led to accelerated professional growth and development.

Along the way I have developed a group of trusted professionals that I go to for professional support and in return I offer support whenever they call me, at what-ever time. You can’t go it alone and you don’t have to. Professional resilience and wellbeing is about creating and having that support network.

In law we often operate in a very competitive environment, both within our workplace and amongst the profession. Showing vulnerability is not part of the culture. I believe this can impede growth and development. When we are vulnerable the greatest learning opportunities arise and deep relationships of trust are forged.

I can recall a seminal moment of my career as a junior solicitor when a partner shared with a group of us an embarrassing mistake he had made. While it may seem a small gesture, it was revelatory to me as a junior solicitor. You can make mistakes (even partners), live to tell the tale, learn something and laugh about it.

By its challenging nature, legal practice can be complex, conflict driven, and stress filled. It creates many opportunities for “on the job” learning. It would be extremely beneficial for solicitors and law firms to utilise these opportunities to further professional development and resilience. There are various ways to do this and the most productive way is through a process of reflective learning, which involves examining the event or issue, exploring the impact and implications, experimenting with possible solutions, followed by a process of evaluation. This can be done through a peer group or one to one. It is essentially a process of review, reflection, critique and replenishment through interactive dialogue, with the aim to focus, refresh and refine professional practice.

Learning from challenges and feeling supported in doing so is an essential part of professional development and growing professional resilience. It is also a way to accelerate personal and professional development. This practice will not only benefit individual solicitors, but also law firms, the profession and clients.

*Madeleine Hawkesby LL.B., B.A. is a life-long learner who is committed to facilitating transformational learning and strategic change. She was admitted to the Bar in 1996, and since then has worked as a solicitor, in legal education and most recently in her own business specialising in employment law and human resource consulting. She is soon to complete a postgraduate certificate in Professional Supervision and is now working with lawyers to facilitate professional development and wellbeing. Her practice is grounded in a reflective learning process, and is strengths based and solutions focused.*