

2026 EDITION (EXTRACT)

# LEGAL LEADERSHIP PLAYBOOK

*Navigate the Complexities of Legal Leadership*



Professional Effectiveness



Leading Your Team



Leading the Organisation

# OVERVIEW

This is an extract of the **SAL Legal Leadership Playbook (2026 Edition)**. What you have here is a curated subset of the complete resource, designed to introduce you to the Playbook's structure, frameworks, and Situation Map. The complete Playbook covers more than 20 leadership situations across all three levels, with full module content, tools, and checklists for every stage of your legal career. **It is a living resource**, think of this extract as your entry point. The full resource is where the deeper work begins.

How do you prepare for a conversation with a struggling junior, navigate the complexity of partnership dynamics, or make decisions with incomplete information?

The Playbook starts with leading yourself: building self-awareness, credibility, and personal effectiveness. It then moves to leading others: supporting, coaching, and bringing out the best in your team. Finally, it deals with leading the organisation: shaping direction, navigating complexity, and building culture.

Each stage represents a deliberate shift in perspective: from self, to team, to the whole organisation.

## PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

*"How do I show up?"*

*Mastering self-management, professional judgment, credibility, and peer-level influence.*

## LEADING YOUR TEAM

*"How do I bring out the best in people?"*

*Developing others, delegating thoughtfully, adapting your leadership style, and coaching for performance.*

## LEADING THE ORGANISATION

*"How do I shape the system?"*

*Navigating change, managing complex stakeholders, leading with courage, and building culture.*

# HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

1

### Match tools to specific leadership challenges

Turn to the Situation Map first. Find the challenge you're facing right now and start there.

2

### Apply frameworks to real situations

Bring proven models into your practice. Leadership is developed through application, not reading.

3

### Work through each section systematically

When you're ready to go deeper, the Playbook builds from self-leadership to team leadership to organisational leadership.

# LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK

## PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

*"How do I show up?"*

- ◆ Developing Professional Judgment & Credibility
- ◆ Managing Time, Energy & Workload
- ◆ Developing Emotional Intelligence
- ◆ Developing Executive Presence
- ◆ Influencing and Persuading Without Authority
- ◆ Giving and Receiving Constructive Feedback
- ◆ Navigating Conflict and Difficult Conversations Through Active Listening

## LEADING YOUR TEAM

*"How do I bring out the best in people?"*

- ◆ Anticipating Challenges and Taking Initiative
- ◆ Continuous Learning through Reflection and Performance Feedback to Others
- ◆ Setting Clear Direction and Expectations
- ◆ Developing Others through Coaching and Mentoring
- ◆ Adapting Your Leadership Style
- ◆ Empowering and Delegating Thoughtfully

## LEADING THE ORGANISATION

*"How do I shape the system?"*

- ◆ Leading with Authenticity and Psychological Safety in Practice
- ◆ Leading with Courage
- ◆ Navigating Ambiguity and Cognitive Control in Crises
- ◆ Strategic Stakeholder Management & Collaboration
- ◆ Inspiring a Shared Vision
- ◆ Managing Change and Fostering a Culture of Innovation and Experimentation
- ◆ Driving Organisational Performance and Accountability

*"Each level is not simply an addition – it is a transformation of perspective, from self, to others, to the organisation as a whole."*

# SITUATION MAP

This map covers leadership situations, grouped into three levels: Professional Effectiveness, Leading Your Team, and Leading the Organisation. It highlights common leadership situations in the legal profession, and each scenario is paired with a suggested approach.

Identify a challenge you're facing and read the first three moves. The complete Playbook enables you to navigate to the relevant section for the full framework and tools. The following examples illustrate the situation-based guidance available across common leadership challenges in the complete Playbook.



## PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

*Judgment, credibility, workload, emotional intelligence, and peer-level influence*

1

**Situation: I am constantly overwhelmed and feel like I am drowning in competing demands.**

**Playbook Module: Managing Time, Energy & Workload**

*Who it applies to: New partner; Senior associate; In-house legal lead*

### First three moves<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Audit where your energy goes, not just your time.
- 2 Schedule recovery time deliberately after intense periods.
- 3 Negotiate workload honestly. Have a direct conversation about capacity rather than absorbing more work silently.

2

**Situation: I am struggling to manage my own emotional reactions. I either shut down or overreact under pressure.**

**Playbook Module: Developing Emotional Intelligence**

*Who it applies to: New partner; Senior associate; In-house legal lead*

### First three moves

- 1 Practise "regulation before resolution": calm yourself before you try to resolve anything.
- 2 Identify your emotional triggers using a journaling or self-reflection practice.
- 3 Work on emotional perception first: pay attention to the signals others are sending before you respond.

<sup>1</sup> The First Three Moves in each situation draw on a curated body of leadership research and practitioner frameworks – from institutions including Harvard Business School, Wharton Executive Education, and the Center for Creative Leadership, and scholars including Brené Brown, Hersey and Blanchard, and Daniel Goleman – contextualised for the realities of legal practice in Singapore.



## LEADING YOUR TEAM

Presence, coaching, delegation, and adapting your style

3

**Situation: A junior team member is underperforming or needs structured development support.**

**Playbook Module: Developing Others Through Coaching and Mentoring**

*Who it applies to: New partner; In-house legal lead*

### First three moves

- 1 Use the SBI model: describe the context, name the observable behaviour, explain the effect.
- 2 Ask questions rather than give instructions. Let them arrive at their own insight.
- 3 Set a SMART goal together and schedule a follow-up.

4

**Situation: I want to delegate more, but I don't trust that things will be done properly.**

**Playbook Module: Empowering and Delegating Thoughtfully**

*Who it applies to: New partner; In-house legal lead*

### First three moves

- 1 Distinguish between trust in capability and trust in effort. They need different responses.
- 2 Align team responsibilities with individual strengths, not just availability.
- 3 Delegate and debrief, not just delegate and disappear. Build in a structured check-in.



## LEADING THE ORGANISATION

Vision, change, culture, stakeholders, and leading under pressure.

5

**Situation: I know I need to raise an uncomfortable issue or challenge a senior view, and I keep avoiding it.**

**Playbook Module: Leading with Courage**

*Who it applies to: New partner; Senior associate; In-house legal lead*

### First three moves

- 1 Have the difficult conversation before it becomes a crisis. The cost of avoidance compounds.
- 2 Hold your position under pressure when evidence and values support it, even if it is inconvenient.
- 3 Acknowledge what you don't know openly. False certainty is more damaging than honest uncertainty.

6

**Situation: My firm or team is facing a crisis, and I need to keep a clear head while everyone around me is panicking.**

**Playbook Module: Navigating Ambiguity and Cognitive Control in Crises**

*Who it applies to: New partner; In-house legal lead*

### Three first moves

- 1 Slow your thinking deliberately. Pause, breathe, engage deliberate reasoning before acting.
- 2 Separate facts from interpretation: what is objectively known versus what you are assuming?
- 3 Communicate with composure. Your team takes its emotional cues from you.

# GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

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The following terms appear in the first three moves column. Each is drawn from the Playbook content referenced in the definition.

## SBI model (Situation, Behaviour, Impact)

A structured feedback framework.

Describe the specific *Situation* in which the behaviour occurred; name the observable *Behaviour* (not the person's character); explain the *Impact* it had. This keeps feedback factual and actionable rather than personal.

*Drawn from Playbook Module: Giving and Receiving Constructive Feedback*

## SMART goals

A goal-setting framework: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

Used in coaching and feedback conversations to turn development intentions into accountable commitments.

*Drawn from Playbook Module: Developing Others through Coaching and Mentoring*

# Your Leadership Journey Starts Here

The complete SAL Legal Leadership Playbook covers more than 20 situations, with curated resources across every module, providing a comprehensive map for every stage of your legal career.



The complete SAL Legal Leadership Playbook is coming soon — available to SAL members on SAL platform(s) at a later date.

**20+**  
situations covered



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