More Than Knowing The Law

Reframing supervision as the greatest compliment

How important is good supervision for risk management? Are good supervisors born or made? What are the red flags that indicate poor supervision? We’ll tackle these questions and more as LPLC’s Chief Risk Manager Heather Hibberd joins Anna Hinder from Searl Street Consulting. With over 20 years experience in HR, Anna specialises in developing the people and leadership skills of professionals.

Heather and Anna discuss how all practitioners, no matter their seniority, can benefit from good supervision. Human error and the stresses of life can lead to avoidable mistakes and costly claims just as much as inexperience can - the support from a second pair of eyes can prevent these mistakes and should be a welcome part of law firm life. Building a culture of proactive supervision in your firm can help deliver quality work safely and support lifelong learning for all staff.

If you are a supervisor who wants to improve your own supervision techniques, or you're being supervised and you’d like to work with your supervisor to improve the process and outcomes this episode is for you!

**In this episode, you will discover:**

* **Are good supervisors born or made - does good supervision require a particular mindset?**

* **“***Good supervision is made - most of the firms who would tag a partner or a senior associate as being a good supervisor - those people themselves have had the great experience of being supervised well.”*

* *“You’re made a good supervisor by having had good supervision yourself.”*

* *“Good supervisors are continued to be made across their career by being positively rewarded for good performance.” About 50% of our individual characteristics come from our DNA - so if you’re open to experience, if you enjoy talking to people, if you get energy from people - then that makes it a bit easier to be a good, effective supervisor.”*

* **What are the inherent risks in bad or no supervision?**

* *“It stops the legal profession meeting its requirements to be a self-managing profession.”*

* *“If you’re not great at supervision, you can’t be confident that you’re producing good work for the community or for your clients.”*

* *“You miss out on an opportunity to develop your team members, and you can’t ensure that things are being done to the highest quality possible - that brings about a level of stress and anxiety that can be removed by increasing supervision.”*

* **What are the most important attributes of good supervision and what kinds of supervision people need?**

* *Supervision is an outcome of a handful of skills that sit underneath it:*
  + *Analytical skills - analyzing a piece of work, how complex/difficult it is.*
  + *Delegation skills - being able to communicate the outcome you’re looking for.*
  + *Checking skills - to check the work that the other person has done.*
  + *Feedback skills - to make sure that they are aware of what they need to do differently.*

* *“Supervision should happen throughout the entire course of someone’s career, but the type of supervision changes, and it’s always just as valuable and as important. “*

* **Characteristics of abusive supervision and how to recover from it?**

* *“One of the characteristics is that people feel like they can never do a good job, like they’re never good enough - the-set-up-to-fail-syndrome.”*

* *“Research shows that a way to recover from someone supervising you badly is to learn to be a better supervisor yourself - allows you to distinguish between your behaviours and how you were performing in the role versus the interaction of that person and how they were supervising you badly.”*

* *“Providing a shared language across the firm on how to do it well is a good place to start.”*

* **What’s the best advice you can give new layers/supervisees coming into the profession?**

* **“***Approach supervision as something that you will both do for others and receive from others all throughout your career - don’t see it as something that you will grow out of.”*

* *“Pay as much attention to how you are supervised, to the supervising techniques that your supervisor uses, and be curious about the systems that they use and about the types of feedback, so you get a starting point in that transition to becoming a supervisor yourself.”*

* *“Try and broaden your comparison set so that you don’t become locked into a way of supervising that only works for people similar to yourself.”*

Acronyms Anna uses

PLT - Practical Legal Training

PMC - Practice Management Certificate

See more from Anna at <https://searlstreet.com/>

Discover more of LPLC’s [Practice Management resources](https://lplc.com.au/risk-advice/practice-management) to help build your firm’s systems and processes.