

**Stronger Links in the Chain:  
Lawyer Evaluation to Professional  
Development to Career Guidance**

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**Topics**

- A. Common Complaints**
- B. Stronger Links from Evaluation to other career needs**
- C. The Verbal Evaluation Session**
- C. Four Choices for Measuring Career Progress –  
Connected to Evaluation**
- D. A 10 Point Report Card for Your Evaluations**
- E. Trends in Evaluation and Compensation**

## Common Complaints about Evaluations?

### Associate Perspective

- Little or no connection to partnership consideration

### Partner Perspective

### Administrator's Perspective

## Stronger Links: Evaluations to Career Development



## Before, During and After Evaluations

### Before

- self assessment
- gather assignment, utilization and prof. development data

### During

- review future assignment needs
- review partner relations issues
- mentoring and professional development needs
- update career goals, set annual goals

### After

- mentor follow up; assignment and utilization follow up
- associate responsibility to pursue goals

## The Verbal Evaluation Session: What it Should Accomplish

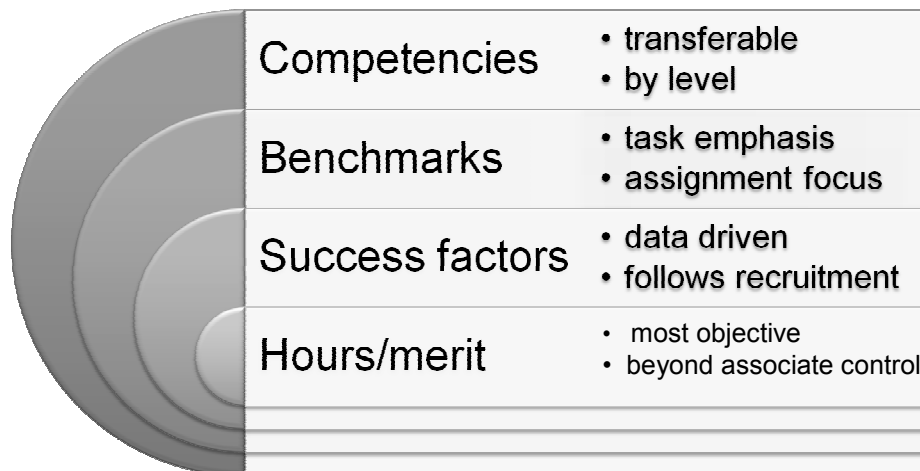


The four components are from the work of Tim Leishman, Firm Leader Inc.

## Associate Takeaway from the Evaluation

1. It was legitimate (fair) – message and feedback
2. I have specific career goals to pursue in my work(competencies, benchmarks, success factors, assignments, hours).
3. I have some “people work” to do – partner relations, staff, teamwork, firm investment contributions, client relations.
4. I can increase my knowledge base – training, mentoring, practice management.
5. I know what skills to improve – legal, management, business development.
6. I want to commit to this work – motivation.

## Four Choices for Measuring Career Progress: The Framework for the Evaluation



## Competency Definition



Any measurable behaviour of an individual that distinguishes performance in a given job, role, organization, or culture.

Example: Associate can select precedents, take delegated instructions and draft an accurate, complete basic document in a transaction with minimal supervision (Third Year)

## A Typical Set of Competency Clusters

Legal Skills and Knowledge

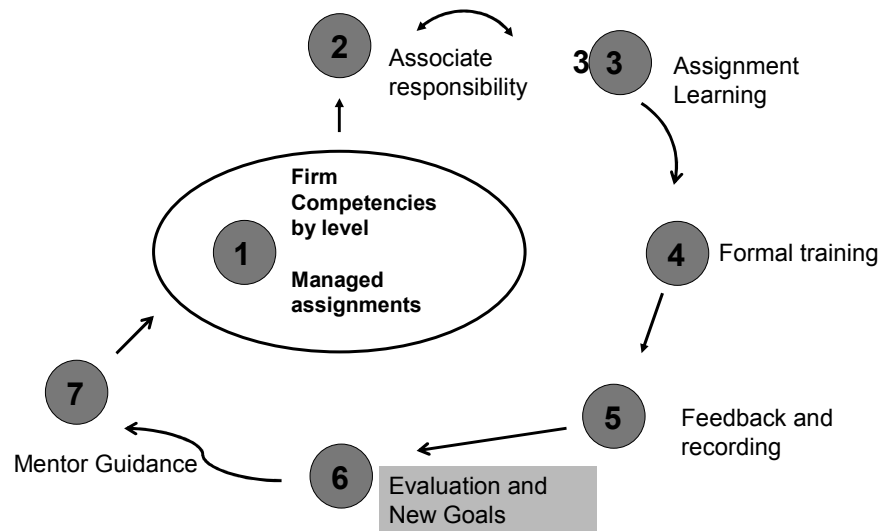
Relational and Leadership Skills

Business/Organization Knowledge, Skills and Judgment

Management Skills

Personal Attributes required across the Competencies

## Competency Framework for Evaluation



## A Benchmarks Framework for Evaluation

### Definition

A task that should be completed at a satisfactory level in the judgment of the supervising lawyer.

### Example

Act as second chair in one deposition.

### Advantages

More easily accepted and measured.  
Assignments can be used more clearly to fill gaps

### Disadvantages

Does not explain what associate can do in a future assignment  
Temptation to avoid quality measurement  
Unwarranted expectations of associates

## A “Success Factors” Approach to Evaluation

The KermaPartners “Success Factors” Study - Playing “Moneyball”

- What factors are associated with success?
- 1300 timekeepers studied; 200 “attributes” reviewed
- Who were the “outperformers”?
- What factors correlated – high positive, neutral, high negative?
- Answer: Not the usual suspects
- Lawyers with 4 or more success factors were 15% more productive, stayed longer and produced more profit

### Implications

- Each firm needs to find its own success factors
- Career guidance and utilization during tenure are critical to supporting success factors
- Evaluation should look to build on success factors, shift to changing success factors in the culture

## An Hours/Merit Approach to Evaluation

### Definition

A combination of minimum hours for base salary and evaluation criteria (usually subjective plus attributes) to award bonus. Merit does not affect base, which is usually lockstep. Bonus can be merit criteria and hours.

### Example

Base for second year is lockstep, but you need 1850 historic hours to move to next step in base; otherwise, frozen base at first year level.


Bonus is merit, based on evaluation criteria plus practice group “message”.

Bonus may be categorized in three “buckets”

### Implications

- Weakest system for career guidance
- Associate has no control over hours
- Appears more objective
- Advancement appears to be on hours, but really occurs via unseen factors

**Four Choices for Measuring Career Progress: Which do you have? Which should your firm have?**



<b>Competencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transferable</li> <li>• by level</li> </ul>
<b>Benchmarks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• task emphasis</li> <li>• assignment focus</li> </ul>
<b>Success factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• data driven</li> <li>• follows recruitment</li> </ul>
<b>Hours/merit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• most objective</li> <li>• beyond associate control</li> </ul>

**Do your evaluations exceed expectations?**

**Resource Paper: A 10 Point Report Card**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Partner Contribution	
Transparency and communications	
Timing – people meet deadlines	
Quality of verbal reviews	
Specific feedback on performance	
Performance measured by career stage	
Clear message about future	
Bonus and advancement decisions consistent	
Follow up afterward – additional features	
Partner ownership of process and structure (e.g. an Eval. Cttee)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

## Trends in Compensation and Evaluation

1. Formal statement of levels
2. Partnership candidate guidance at year 5-6
3. Simplification of lengthy evaluation forms
4. Evaluation questions tailored to levels
5. Evaluations connected to competencies (less so benchmarks)
6. Merit – based compensation base and bonus.
7. More attention to nurturing success factors, side-by-side with evaluation messages (Keep the Keepers)

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