

Operationalizing Neurodiversity Success in Law Firms: “Working with Me” Technique

Lisa Nieuwveld, Founder & Senior Lawyer
- *Inclusief Consulting*

Jennifer Little, Senior Manager of
Attorney Development - *Haynes Boone*

Inclusief Consulting



Agenda & Purpose

- Introductions
- Neurodiversity in the legal profession
- Culture Observation Role-Play
- Working with Me activity
- Discussion / Q&A

Inclusief Consulting



Let's Role Play!

- Activity
- Discussion
- Relevance

Inclusief Consulting



Working with Me

- Purpose
 - Non-verbal method of qual sharing amongst all members of the organization.
- Long / Short Form
- Use cases; feedback/outcomes

Questions





Contact Information

Lisa Nieuwveld

Founder & Senior Lawyer

Inclusief Consulting

benchnieuwveldlisa@gmail.com

Jennifer Little

Senior Manager of Attorney Development

Haynes Boone LLP

Jennifer.little@haynesboone.com

Thank You

Inclusief Consulting

Working with Me – Long Form*

Introduction:

We all have those things that we value more than others, the unspoken “hard expectations” that truly build trust and strong working relationships. This User Guide is intended to help take such unspoken expectations and put them in writing so that you have a good sense of what is expected and my general approach to working together.

How do I view success?

1. Ownership of your designated scope – that also includes taking on new opportunities that were not envisioned and filling in any discovered gaps. Grow with your role!
2. Create deadlines – always, always, always (1) respond with an acknowledgement for any request received (from me or anyone else at work) and (2) provide a turnaround time that you will complete your part of the ask (remember to build in some buffer time);
3. Keep deadlines – this is a hard expectation for me. Make deadlines and ALWAYS keep them short of a family emergency. Of course, we can discuss things as new facts and circumstances may be discovered in our path to achieving our promised deadlines, but my BIGGEST measure of success – REASONABLE DEADLINES ARE MADE AND ALWAYS KEPT. This is a reflection on how well you can manage your calendar even though other small things may constantly pop up through your day. I still expect deadlines to be met.

What I promise in return:

1. I will acknowledge your requests within 24 hours (48 at the latest).
2. I will provide you deadlines for what I promise to get to you.
3. I will stick to those deadlines barring family emergencies.
4. I will make time to help, discuss and listen.

How I communicate:

1. I prefer written over verbal communications so that it can be referenced and reflected upon; therefore, all roadmaps, requests and instructions should be in writing and submitted via email or tagged live in a document on our document management system;
2. For the quick and informal communications, Teams is the best way to reach me;
3. I plan to set up weekly 1:1 syncs with team leads and monthly with greater team as I recognize relationship building is greatly enhanced through really talking and listening to each other. This will be your chance to share anything with me that has been on your mind or speak a bit “off the record”.
4. I am a direct communicator. I do not read between the lines well and strongly appreciate not having to do so. I will not be offended – just tell me how it is. If I have to peel someone back like an onion, it may result in a less effective working relationship.

Things I do that may annoy or be misunderstood:

1. My direct style of communication may lead some people to think that I am saying one thing but meaning something else or trying to be aggressive or competitive. I truly and sincerely

Working with Me – Long Form*

do not have that ability in my social repertoire and have little to no patience for games. I really just mean what I say.

2. I repeat myself, frequently. If I feel uncertain that my point is accurately understood (not agreed upon, just understood) then I will keep repeating the point. This is not meant to be aggressive, but a signal that I am feeling less confident that I have successfully relayed my point.
3. I can be hyper focused and discuss same topic for a long time. It is how I work through things and not meant to be insensitive to your agenda.

What gains and loses my trust?

1. Not setting or keeping deadlines;
2. Not responding to all communications;
3. Not telling the truth.

This means doing the opposite gains my trust!

My Strengths:

1. Seeing the big picture;
2. Sincerely caring about my reports;
3. Working hard and not asking more than I give;
4. Organization!;
5. Producing a lot in a short time;
6. Brainstorming and creating roadmaps, strategic visions and action steps;
7. Seeing the “real” issue; and
8. Presenting and educating.

My Growth Areas:

1. Accurately comprehending what people are saying in the moment, and reading between the lines;
2. Social graces and popularity;
3. Taking contemporaneous notes;
4. Remembering exactly what is needed when only provided verbally;
5. Initiating and managing administrative items (like reaching out to IT, finding out who the correct contact is and do the “in the weeds” work) across multiple areas; and
6. Resolving matters over the phone or zoom meetings without agenda and time to prep.

My expectations of my direct reports:

1. Create deadlines and meet them;
2. Always be working off of a roadmap;
3. If you get repeated requests, find a way to scale them to save time in the future;
4. Help empower others for greater efficiency;
5. Be direct, honest and open with me;
6. Always have a set of goals you are working towards;

Working with Me – Long Form*

7. Maintain trackers so that there is business continuity should you become unexpectedly unavailable AND so others have an idea of where the project is at that time; and
8. Always provide full context when sending anyone information (such as why this came about, what is the background story) with a clear action item if you are requesting something to be done.

Giving and receiving feedback:

1. Feel free to provide feedback to me whenever it comes up!
2. I will address things as they arise, so no surprises come when annual reviews come up.
3. Let me know how you best prefer feedback.

Working with Me – Short Form*

Overview

- I love working on deals and closing them as fast as possible is important to me, without sacrificing quality.
- In order to do that, I need help.
 - I will let you know when it is time to schedule a call to discuss with the counterparty;
 - I will aim to always return redlines with comments within [x] business days from receipt and so you will not need to feel compelled to stalk me;
 - I prefer the written word – my mind is like a sieve and so reflecting on comments and request in writing makes me much more effective!
 - I won't be able to attend unexpected calls without agendas and before I signaled it is needed and so it is best to not schedule them.

Communication style

- Writing is my gem! I love transcripts in meetings, after meeting notes automatically sent out for any meetings that had to be live and a chance to review/clarify as needed.
- Messages – small, quick messages via Teams or emails are wonderful. I will respond quickly as I am a compulsive checker 😊 Unexpected, unscheduled phone calls, however, may send me running. Let's always prepare.

Contributor

- I value this company and my contribution to it. In order to give my best:
 - Provide at least 2 days' notice on meetings
 - Include an agenda
 - Make it clear what expectations there are for my participation.
- If I do not respond orally immediately, I am taking your comment/request very serious and thoroughly considering it in my mind. Give me a moment, I will respond shortly! It may be with more questions 😊

Fun

- I love having fun, quick visits just to get to know my colleagues!
- Working together in teams is where I best shine, with clear communication and instructions 😊