



From Lawyer to Leader: What to Ask Yourself Before Stepping into Leadership

A self-reflection guide for ambitious lawyers ready to take the next step in their career

Stepping into a leadership role is one of the most rewarding (and challenging) transitions a lawyer can make. Whether you're considering leading a small team or taking on a Head of Department role, leadership requires a shift in mindset, priorities, and purpose.

This guide is designed to help you reflect on whether you're ready, what might be holding you back, and how you can lay the groundwork to make a confident move into leadership.

1. Are you ready to shift from doing to leading?

As a fee earner, your success is largely defined by the work you deliver, the cases you close, the clients you serve, and the targets you hit.

As a leader, your success becomes about what others achieve through your guidance.

That means:

- Delegating work instead of doing it all yourself
- Prioritising mentorship, team morale, and development
- Being comfortable with stepping back so others can step up

Ask yourself:

- 🔗 Can I take satisfaction from seeing others succeed?
- 🔗 Am I prepared to measure my value differently - by the performance and growth of my team rather than my own billings?

2. Do you understand your leadership style?

Great leaders know their natural style and when to adapt it.

Are you more directive or collaborative? Do you motivate through structure, support, or inspiration?

Take time to reflect on:

- 🔗 How you like to make decisions
- 🔗 How you handle conflict and give feedback
- 🔗 How you respond under pressure

Self-awareness is the foundation of authentic leadership. The more you understand your own strengths and blind spots, the more effectively you'll be able to lead others.

3. Are you developing the right skills now?

Leadership isn't something that starts when you're promoted, it's something you build towards.

Start developing the skills you'll need early on, such as:

- ✔ Strategic thinking
- ✔ Communication and empathy
- ✔ Commercial awareness
- ✔ Coaching and delegation

Look for opportunities to practise them, whether that's mentoring a junior colleague, taking ownership of a project, or representing your team in firm-wide initiatives.

4. Are you prepared for the people challenges?

Managing people can be the most rewarding and sometimes the most difficult part of leadership.

You'll need to handle different personalities, expectations, and motivations, all while keeping the team aligned and performing.

Ask yourself:

- ❓ Am I comfortable having difficult conversations?
- ❓ Can I stay calm and fair when things go wrong?
- ❓ Do I genuinely enjoy helping others grow?

If your answers are mostly yes, you're already thinking like a leader.

5. Does this fit with your long-term career goals?

Before you take that step, be honest about what you want from your career.

Leadership isn't the only route to progression, some lawyers find greater fulfilment in technical expertise or client development.

Ask yourself:

- ❓ Do I want to manage people, or do I want to deepen my legal specialism?
- ❓ What kind of environment will allow me to thrive?
- ❓ Does my current firm offer the support and structure to help me succeed in leadership?

6. How Realm can help

At Realm, we work with lawyers at every stage of their career, from newly qualified solicitors to Heads of Department and Partners. If you're thinking about stepping into leadership, we can help you assess your readiness, understand your options, and connect you with opportunities that align with your goals and values.

Start the conversation: Speak to one of our specialist legal recruiters for a confidential chat about your next step.