



WELL-BEING WEEK IN LAW

WELL-BEING WEEK IN LAW ACTIVITY PLANNING GUIDE



STAY STRONG
Physical Well-Being



ALIGN
Spiritual Well-Being



ENGAGE & GROW
Career & Intellectual Well-Being



CONNECT
Social Well-Being



FEEL WELL
Emotional Well-Being

Activity Title:	Positive Leadership Panel
Well-Being Dimension:	Organizational Track: Cultures of Trust, Fairness, & Transparency
Resources/Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-8 leaders, including a mix of attorneys and administrative leaders • 1 moderator to ask or prompt questions and follow-up on information shared
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Activity Objectives:

- Bolster understanding of the link between a culture of trust and fairness and well-being; bring attention to areas where the organization is doing well and how it can improve; identify actions that can be taken to improve well-being by building a culture of trust and fairness.
- Convey the importance of the topic by asking top leaders to participate and share perspectives and strategies.
- Encourage participation and reflection by soliciting questions and responding thoughtfully to them.

Well-Being Connection (How/Why Does this Work?)

Extensive research has found that trust and fairness are substantial contributors to well-being and peak functioning at work.

FAIRNESS

The experience of unfairness triggers negative thoughts and emotions that can harm mental and physical health. People are so highly sensitive to fairness, because they interpret it as a cue about whether they're valued and respected; it affects their sense of belonging, self-worth, and status. People monitor fairness in multiple ways:

- **Distributive Fairness:** Fairness in distribution of rewards (e.g., compensation, promotion, credit for business acquisition, work assignments, committee memberships, leader appointments, etc.) and responsibilities (e.g., "office housework," firm citizenship, work hour distribution, etc.).
- **Procedural Fairness:** Fairness in important decision-making processes (e.g., being given a voice in the process, consistency, lack of bias, accuracy, opportunity for correction, ethical).
- **Interpersonal Fairness:** Being treated with dignity, politeness, and respect during the decision-making process.

Well-Being Connection (How/Why Does This Work?)

- **Informational fairness:** Receiving sincere, clear, and appropriately-detailed explanations for decisions in a timely manner.
- **Fair Exchange** (effort-reward balance): One's perceived efforts/contributions are fairly balanced with perceived rewards provided by the firm (e.g., compensation, esteem and social rewards, job security, career opportunities).

Strategies for Enhancing Real & Perceived Fairness Include:

1. Fully invest in ensuring that organizational processes are fair and that people are treated politely and with respect (i.e., procedural and interpersonal fairness). These elements are as important to well-being (if not more so) as actual outcomes.
2. Carefully review all processes for fairness that matter most to firm members—especially those that influence rewards, advancement, and feelings of status/value.
3. Consider supervisory training about the value and pathways of enhancing fairness.

An accessible reading about workplace fairness is Joel Brockner's article, [Why Its So Hard to Be Fair?](#)

TRUST

Trust in managers and the organization generally is highly related to both well-being and job performance—including higher energy and engagement and lower stress and burnout. Trust and fairness are interrelated—fairness bolsters trust. A key driver of trust is reciprocity—we reflexively want to repay others who have helped us and expect the same in return. Trust will depend on people feeling that their leaders and the organization generally invest in them as much as they contribute. In his *Harvard Business Review* article [The Neuroscience of Trust](#), trust researcher Paul Zack offers the following strategies for building trust in the workplace:

1. Build high-quality relationships in which you regularly support and invest in others, share vulnerability, and develop social bonds.
2. Celebrate successes and never pass up an opportunity to recognize excellence.
3. Invest in people's growth by providing opportunities for positive challenge in which they feel stretched but not over-matched and sufficiently supported.
4. Give people discretion in how they work—trust begets trust.
5. Enable people to craft their jobs in ways that fit their strengths and interests.
6. Share information broadly.

A few accessible readings about trust include Jack Zenger & Joseph Folkman's article [The 3 Elements of Trust](#) and Robert Hurley's article [The Decision to Trust](#).

Well-Being Connection (How/Why Does This Work?)

POSITIVE LEADERS BOLSTER WELL-BEING THROUGH TRUST & FAIRNESS

Leaders have a big impact on organizational members' well-being through leadership styles that bolster the experience of trust and fairness along with many other behaviors that contribute to psychologically healthy work cultures. Positive business leaders prioritize organizational members' well-being and optimal functioning as much as business success. Courtney Ackerman's article [Positive Leadership: 30 Must-Have Traits and Skills](#) provides a helpful summary of Positive Leadership and a list of strategies for bolstering well-being, including by building trust:

Positive Leadership Behaviors

1. Show people that you value them. Nurture relationships as well as skills and professional development.
2. Boost positive emotions and encourage positive social exchanges.
3. Deliver on the commitments you make.
4. Set high expectations for yourself and others--and live up to them and support them in doing so.
5. Promote self-determination in your followers (see the *Harvard Business Review* article by Anne Brafford and Rich Ryan explaining self determination theory-based leader behaviors: [3 Ways To Motivate Your Team Through An Extended Crisis](#)).
6. Work well with others. Engage in teamwork and collaborate and encourage and coach others to do so.
7. Proactively take steps to resolve workplace conflicts as quickly and effectively as possible.
8. Explicitly and regularly convey your desire and willingness to help, support, and develop others.
9. Model your personal values that motivate your behaviors, not just the behaviors themselves.
10. Avoid passive behaviors that cause people to feel overlooked and neglected and that leave them to resolve their own challenges and conflicts unless a crisis arises.

Procedure

The goal of the Positive Leadership Panel is to gather senior leaders from across the organization to focus on practices that protect and promote well-being by contributing to a culture of trust and fairness.

LOGISTICS:

- Recruit 6-8 leaders, including attorneys and administrative leaders.
- Recruit 1 moderator to ask or prompt questions/follow-up on information shared.
- Recommended session length: 60-minute session in total with 45 minutes for the presentation of ideas and 15 minutes for employee questions.
- **Practice Tip:** So that organizational members feel more comfortable asking questions, invite them to submit them in writing before the panel and keep their names confidential. Do use the chat/dialog box during the session if a team member is able to moderate it and send emerging questions to the panel moderator.

Procedure

PANEL QUESTION IDEAS:

Below are a list of possible questions related to trust and fairness to ask your leader panel to address:

1. As we continue to navigate the hybrid work environment, how have you found new ways to show your team members or colleagues that you value them?
2. How do you respond when there is a conflict amongst team members? What have you found to be the most effective approach to ensure folks are treated equally?
3. As leaders, do you ever feel pressure to maintain a calm demeanor, while struggling to manage your own stress, anxiety, or other mental health issue? Do you speak candidly about these feelings with your team members?
4. Can you remember an experience early in your career which defined trust or fairness for you? How does your experience inform the team/organizational culture you are building?
5. In today's society, transparency and full disclosure have become the norm. If it's not gained from one source, it can be gained from another. Can you share how this transparency translates or does not translate in law firm management? How do you build trust when full disclosure is not always prudent/possible?
6. When people feel valued, accepted, included, and supported, i.e., there is a sense of belonging, that helps create an environment of trust. How do you create this kind of environment, particularly with respect to women and minorities?
7. Many associates (and some non-equity partners) at home in the pandemic felt that they were in the dark with respect to what changes might take place at their firms. Many wanted to know, for example, if there were going to be layoffs, whether pay/bonuses would be impacted, whether there would be hybrid arrangements upon return, etc. Those who were kept informed felt the firms were being transparent with them which eased their anxiety. Those who were kept in the dark with respect to possible firm changes experienced more stress and worry. How did/does your firm keep associates involved and informed of developments that impact them at this time?
8. One way companies create safety and trust with respect to mental health and substance use issues is by having those in leadership positions address the issue - sometimes even sharing their own challenges - and urging those who need help to get help. This requires vulnerability at the top levels of management. What has your firm done to help reduce stigma and be more vulnerable/transparent in this regard (which could help others feel safe?).