



Leadership & the Law

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As an executive coach, mentor and management consultant, I work with leaders who are required to manage complex legal and regulatory issues on a daily basis. In my experience, clients who have acquired a solid understanding of their legal responsibilities as managers - or owners - are more effective in leading their organizations. On the other hand, I have seen too often costs to organizations resulting from their leaders not knowing the legal issues they are facing, the pertinent legal questions to ask and not consulting their internal legal team, or outside counsel, in a timely fashion. For instance, there are many legal risks that should be factored into management's decision-making when entering into contractual negotiations with vendors, joint venture partners and acquisition targets. There is an ever expanding array of liability issues associated with human resources management, environmental regulations and intellectual property issues.

In a recent article on the University of Toronto's Faculty of Law Global Professional Master of Laws program (GPLLM), I found a very timely perspective on this important subject. (*Globe and Mail*, May 3, 2018) This program is a 12-month executive-style Masters of Laws which marries U of T's deserved reputation for academic rigour with pragmatic real-world expertise. What intrigued me was that the GPLLM program is aimed at executives and managers in the private, public or non-profit sectors, as well as practicing lawyers. Of the 85 students in the class of 2018, 63% are new to law; and 48% are women while 52% are men. The students of the class of 2018 have on average 12 years of work experience.

So, what attracts busy leaders to invest their scarce time and money in this program? The pace of change we are experiencing is unparalleled in human history. Today's leaders recognize the need to draw on a broad range of knowledge to keep atop of current and future challenges. Our volatile and complex economy creates risks that senior executives and leaders must effectively manage and resolve. (See my August 27, 2017, article [Surviving or Thriving? Prospering Through Purpose](#).) According to Ed Iacobucci, Dean of the Faculty of Law, the GPLLM aims to "reshape the way leaders think. The law has an impact on a large portion of issues in the business world, yet executive education doesn't offer that lens. The capacity to look at complexity, recognize the nuance and apply legal reasoning to come up with the best answer to a difficult problem is invaluable." ("University of Toronto program helps executives master the law", *Globe and Mail*, May 3, 2018)

Founded in 2011, the GPLLM has four concentrations: Business Law; Canadian Law in a Global Context; Innovation, Law and Technology; and the Law of Leadership. The curriculum is carefully designed to balance leaders' challenging professional commitments with intensive study and professional development in individual and group setting. Students are exposed to the legal issues and problems that are most timely and relevant. They acquire the transformative skills and knowledge that will inform their responses to the wide-ranging challenges full of nuance of our rapidly changing global economy.

For many students, the program offers new perspectives and opportunities. Howard Shearer for example, CEO of Hitachi Canada and an Engineer by training, has worked 35 years in the tech sector. He feels the legal background he acquired at GPLLM has added a vital element to his tool kit. He says he now has a "deeper understanding of the challenges his legal team faces". This has "opened the door to more productive discussions in the boardroom particularly regarding risk management." ("University of Toronto program helps executives master the law", *Globe and Mail*, May 3, 2018)

In my experience, the most successful leaders understand that they must not only develop new ways of doing business to thrive; they are also stewards of the communities they serve. This is exemplified by

another GPLLM graduate. Kevin Vuong was named by Corporate Knights magazine one of Canada's "Top 30 Under 30" for his work in helping to foster more resilient and livable communities. He is a community leader, city-builder, university lecturer and military officer using social innovation to build healthier, complete communities. (See his LinkedIn profile.) He is currently running for public office in the 2018 Toronto Municipal Election.

Increasingly, leaders recognize that legal literacy is a major benefit to their career development and to their organizations. To the best of my knowledge, the type of training offered at the GPLLM is unique in Canada. I would expect other institutions will want to offer comparable programs in future.

For more on the GPLLM, see <http://connect.law.utoronto.ca/gpllm-law-of-leadership/>