

Hey! What's New? 2025-112

Leadership In Tax Practice: Inspiring Teams and Driving Growth Amid Industry Change

Mark Gallegos writes, in *The Tax Adviser*, that “For many firms, the challenge is no longer about whether we can technically perform the work. It is about how we lead people through uncertainty, inspire teams to do their best work, and create a culture where innovation and growth can thrive. Whether you are leading a solo practice, a midsize regional firm, or a multi-office national tax group, leadership today is more dynamic, more personal and more essential than ever.”

While technical credibility still matters, he writes, it is no longer enough. “Today’s leadership model is about how you connect with others, cultivate culture and lead by example.”

According to Gallego, “emotional intelligence (EQ) has emerged as a differentiator among effective leaders. It means being attuned to your team’s needs, recognizing burnout before it becomes turnover and knowing how to communicate difficult truths with empathy. Especially in the post-pandemic hybrid work environment, leaders must be intentional about staying visible and accessible, making space for both structured check-ins and informal connection.”

Equally important, he adds, “is purpose-driven leadership. Today’s professionals, particularly the younger generations, want more than a paycheck. They want to work for organizations that reflect their values, places where they can make a difference, not just meet a deadline. Leaders who tie firm goals to a greater purpose — whether supporting small businesses, helping families build wealth, or fostering community development — will find stronger loyalty and deeper engagement from their teams.”

The tax landscape has always been dynamic, he notes, “but the pace and volume of change in recent years have been staggering. Legislative overhauls, pandemic-era tax relief, shifts in client expectations and talent shortages have created both chaos and opportunity. The question is not whether change is coming; it is whether we will be ready for it.”

Great leaders do not wait for clarity, Gallego says. “They lead with conviction in ambiguity. They recognize when it is time to pivot and rally their teams around a new direction. For instance, many firms that relied heavily on compliance revenue recognized early that this model was at risk. As tax preparation became increasingly commoditized, forward-thinking leaders moved to repackage their services with an advisory-first mindset, helping clients make better financial decisions, not just preparing returns.”

At the same time, he writes, “these leaders looked inward and modernized how work gets done. Process automation, document management systems and client portals were once ‘future investments.’ Now, they are the backbone of efficient, modern practices. Leaders who championed technology adoption, training, and workflow redesign have positioned their firms for speed, scalability, and flexibility.”

Another strategy has been embracing nontraditional staffing models. “Leaders are increasingly tapping into remote talent pools, fractional professionals and global teams. These models not only expand capacity but allow firms to stay nimble, especially during busy season.”

Gallego believes that one of the most overlooked leadership responsibilities is sponsorship, “not just teaching junior team members how to prepare a return but advocating for their growth, exposing them to new opportunities and giving them a seat at the table before they think they are ready. It is about helping others see their potential and giving them room to rise. Formal mentorship programs are a good start, but high-performing firms go beyond that. They create learning cultures where it is OK to ask questions, try new things and learn from mistakes. They encourage curiosity, cross-training, and creative problem-solving.”

Leadership development is also about succession planning. “Who is ready to step up when you step out? Building leadership pipelines is not just a nice gesture; it is how firms survive transitions, retain clients and protect institutional knowledge. Leaders must identify high-potential talent, offer targeted development and create clear paths to advancement.”

Growth does not happen by accident, Gallego points out. “It is the result of clear vision, disciplined execution and a team that believes in the mission. Visionary leadership starts with understanding where the market is going and positioning the firm to meet clients where they will be, not just where they are now.”

Whether you are a managing partner, he concludes, “a tax director, or an up-and-coming senior, your leadership matters. Right now. In how you show up. In how you invest in your team. And in how you shape the future of your firm and the profession.”

For a whole lot more advice, check out [Leadership in tax practice: Inspiring teams and driving growth amid industry change](#).