

ASK · Q

A GAME CHANGER FOR
IN-HOUSE LEGAL TEAMS

White paper

The future is human: How Ask Q rethinks HR for innovation

Introduction

In many small organizations, HR is still seen as a compliance-focused department, mostly there to support the business in the best way possible. Handling payroll, interviewing candidates, drafting labour agreements and policy enforcement are often the main topics that cross our mind when we think of HR. While these tasks are of course essential, defining HR solely by them severely limits its impact.

When HR is only seen as a support function, its full potential goes unused, especially at a time when companies are eager to grow and innovate. And that's exactly where the paradox lies: many small companies are bursting with innovation when it comes to their products or services, but when it comes to organizing HR, they often fall back on outdated methods. And no, putting a ping-pong table in the office doesn't move the needle. Real innovation in HR goes much deeper than perks.

That's exactly why Ask Q chose to rethink HR and legal careers from the ground up. You simply can't claim to be a game changer in every client pitch yet stick to outdated practices when it comes to organizing your own people.

A shift in mindset: HR at the heart of change

Innovative companies know their biggest asset isn't tech or process, it's people. And HR is the function that shapes how these people are hired, developed, and recognized. And even how to part ways with respect when the time comes.

That is also why HR Leads should always be part of the leadership team, even in small companies. It allows HR to step into a strategic role, move beyond policy enforcement and become a driver of performance.



**“When HR leads with intent,
it becomes an architect of change.”**

The three pillars of innovative HR

These are the pillars that shape HR at Ask Q:

1. Hire attitude, train skills
2. Learning that sticks, not just slides
3. Culture by design

1. Hire attitude, train skills

Innovation begins with who you hire and how you empower them. Instead of seeking perfect resumes, we look for curiosity, resilience and attitude. We like to hire someone who's a bit of a wild card.

“We hire for potential, not perfection.”

From day one, we create a safe space where any idea - however crazy - is welcomed. We also make a conscious effort to avoid responses like, “Yes, but we’ve tried that before and it didn’t work.” It is a culture of “fail forward” that encourages learning and growth. We also empower employees to shape their roles actively, rather than just filling predefined positions.

2. Learning that sticks, not just slides

Traditional training often fails to keep pace with the real-world challenges. More than ever, learning should be a mindset, not just a task. Therefore, learning should be embedded into daily work.

We encourage knowledge sharing and learning that happens in teams. Experimentation is what helps you do things better, not just know more. We also gave a crucial role to internal and external mentorship and coaching to ensure learning is continuous, practical and team-driven.

We don’t just value expertise, we share it. Within our labs, we organize regular meetings to share knowledge. Across our labs we host ‘Braingyms’ where colleagues can learn from each other on topics that go beyond their own area of expertise and broaden their understanding of different domains. This encourages curiosity beyond one’s own specialism.

3. Culture by design

Innovation thrives in a culture where people feel safe to speak up, challenge assumptions and take risks. HR has a unique role in intentionally designing such a culture.

That means setting clear values and rituals to support the behaviours we want. But it also means running trainings that help everyone understand what makes each personality unique, and how to give feedback that really works for each person.

You can build the most amazing HR framework you want, but if the foundation isn't solid, it all falls apart. That foundation is trust. And trust means feeling safe to speak up when something's bothering you, without fearing any fallout.

What we've done differently

Those are all great ideas, of course, but they don't mean much if they're not put into action. More often than not, the real challenge isn't in the ideas themselves, but in how well they're executed.

Here are a few ways we've put our ideas into action:

☑ Re-think the classic career tracks

Rather than a one-size-fits all path, we offer three distinct career tracks that allow people to:

- **Lead** by taking on team or people management
- **Deepen** their legal expertise
- **Broaden** into non-legal roles (like marketing, HR or legal ops)



We want people to grow in line with their strengths and passions, not just climb the ladder for the sake of it. Each track is equally rewarding and respected. That creates stronger, more motivated teams and individuals.

By allowing people to shape their careers based on their own aspirations, we empower them to stay engaged and evolve, without needing to leave the company to grow.

☑ Personal Development Plans

Every team member creates a Personal Development Plan that intentionally balances professional skills and personal growth. We don't settle for vague ambitions or passive goal-setting. We expect a genuine commitment from everyone to clearly define their growth objectives, the obstacles they see and the training/ coaching/ mentorship they see as necessary.

The PDP is not a once-a-year formality. It serves as a living blueprint that guides ongoing, meaningful conversations throughout the year. This continuous dialogue keeps development practical, focused, and motivating.

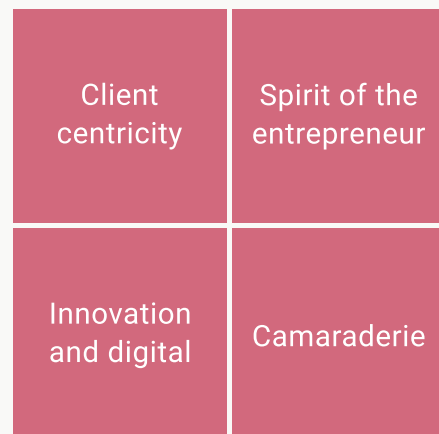
☑ Competency based performance management

Competencies and performance management are directly linked to the career track each consultant chooses. This ensures that feedback and expectations are relevant and tailored to their personal growth path.

At the same time, we are one team, and staying aligned is crucial, no matter which track someone is on. That's why we evaluate everyone against four core, generic competencies we all share. These are the cornerstones of our culture and reflect our focus on shared values and innovation.

The 4 generic competencies

They translate the DNA and the values of Ask Q as a whole



This mix keeps our performance culture both fair and future-focused, supporting individual growth while strengthening what we stand for as a team.

Key takeaways and inspiration

Transforming HR into a strategic driver of innovation doesn't require massive budgets. Rest assured: we don't have those big budgets either. It just starts with intentional choices that reflect how people actually learn, grow and make an impact. What matters even more is having the discipline to stick to the same principles, even when things get tough. That's when culture truly shows up.

“You don't need big budgets to rethink HR, just big intent.”



Small, consistent changes in how you structure careers, encourage learning and evaluate performance can make a big difference in turning HR into a true engine of innovation.

Here are a few actions any organization can consider, inspired by what did work out for us:

- ✓ **Offer career paths that match different ambitions:** not everyone wants to become a leader or manager. Offering options, keeps growth accessible and relevant for everyone.
- ✓ **Make personal development practical and personal:** a good development plan doesn't just focus on technical expertise, that's the easy part. It also builds the softer skills that drive collaboration, adaptability, and leadership. Don't settle for mediocrity or treat it as a tick-the-box exercise. Real growth deserves more than that.
- ✓ **Link performance to purpose:** when you balance individual goals with shared values in your performance process, you build unity without compromising individuality.
- ✓ **Create space for cross-team learning:** Innovation doesn't follow policies or charts, it emerges from unexpected connections. So we create space for regular knowledge-sharing, across teams and silos, to keep ideas flowing.

Conclusion

Innovation isn't a department, it's a mindset and HR has the unique power to shape that mindset across the entire organization. By designing career paths that reflect real ambitions, embedding learning into daily work, and aligning performance with purpose, HR can do far more than support the business, it can shape its future.

We believe that when people are trusted to grow, encouraged to share, and empowered to lead in their own way, innovation doesn't need to be forced, it happens naturally.

Get in touch

For any further details, please [email Isabelle](#) or [visit our website](#) to learn more.

