

How **Williams Parker** Elevates Attorney Learning and Staff Development with **SkillBurst**

Sarasota, Fla.-based Williams Parker has built a well-received and highly respected professional development program by pairing partner-led moderated discussions with SkillBurst's Professional Essentials online training modules. Focused on power skills and practical topics like billing and case management, the firm uses SkillBurst as the foundation for interactive sessions and real-world mentoring. The program also supports the firm's LEAD (Leadership Exploration and Development) initiative, aligning with its core values and nurturing the professional and personal growth of its lawyers and professional staff. The result is a scalable and engaging learning experience that strengthens associate performance, reinforces firm culture, and enhances client results.

When Denise Ames, Director of Human Resources at law firm Williams Parker, talks about professional development and training, she doesn't begin with checklists or compliance. She starts with people's value, importance, and growth.

"What makes a firm a great place to work is the investment we make in developing our people, not just as attorneys and business people, but as human beings," Ames said. "With the support of our management committee and leadership, we're showing our people that we care, we value their continuous learning, and they have a place to grow."



Denise Ames, Director of Human Resources
Williams Parker

“

What makes a firm a great place to work is the investment we make in developing our people, not just as attorneys and business people, but as human beings.

Denise Ames,
Director of Human Resources

”

Ames has played a key role since she arrived seven years ago in helping shape the 45-lawyer firm's approach to professional development. Like many HR & talent leaders at midsize firms, she faces a familiar challenge: ensuring new attorneys and professional staff get the basics, find their footing in the firm's culture, and build the skills that turn potential into performance. Williams Parker's approach pairs SkillBurst's Professional Essentials modules with mentor-led panel discussions that help connect the dots between knowledge and practical execution.

From Passive Learning to Interactive Mentorship

The firm has used SkillBurst since 2019 and maintains 45 Professional Essentials modules. These law firm-specific, 10 to 15-minute e-learning vignettes cover everything from timekeeping and feedback to profitability and conflict resolution.

But the program doesn't stop at screen-based learning. It comes to life in monthly small group discussions as part of its LEAD program—an acronym for Leadership Exploration and Development. Designed for associates on the path to partnership,

LEAD weaves together SkillBurst modules, in-person facilitation, and panel discussions led by partners and senior associates.

Roughly 25 people attend each session. Facilitators play a module, pause for discussion, and invite open dialogue.

The sessions often go beyond the module content itself, and in some cases, have delivered immediate results.

For example, one segment on billing sparked a conversation about collection practices. An associate immediately called a client after the session to discuss their bill. A long-overdue payment was collected that same afternoon.

Tied to Firm Values, Tailored to Firm Needs

Ames said SkillBurst also aligns well with Williams Parker's four core values to strive for: Personable, Industrious, Professional, and Intellectual. The firm has grouped its training content into tracks that reflect these values, helping attorneys see the connection between their daily development and the firm's broader mission.

“Every training track maps back to those values, which helps reinforce who we are and how we work together,” said Ames.

“

We have a multi-layered mentoring program, but this group format sparks conversations that might not happen otherwise,” Ames said. “People lean in, share, and help each other understand and apply learnings. That’s powerful.

Denise Ames,
Director of Human Resources

”

This structure ensures that the training feels purposeful and relevant, with each module contributing to a larger vision for the firm and its clients.

The firm also uses multiple modules in a session when topics are related, creating deeper, more comprehensive discussions. Facilitator guides from SkillBurst help streamline preparation and make it easier for facilitators to lead without starting from scratch.

With the flexibility to mix, match, and occasionally rotate modules, Ames and her team, which includes Human Resources Coordinator Kelly Fleeman, can adapt the curriculum to new needs. Though designed and purchased for lawyer training, the value extends across the firm.

“The modules are tailored to legal professionals, but the content is so practical that it helps everyone. Watching summer associates have those ‘aha’ moments is great to see,” said Fleeman.

Summer associates and even undergraduate interns participate in foundational sessions like “Strategies for Managing Assignments,” which has also become a rubric for performance and feedback.

More Than Training: A Quality and Culture Statement

Ames and Fleeman say the visual quality and polish of the modules also reinforce the firm’s culture of excellence.

“When a new associate sees these beautifully branded modules, it sends a message that we have high standards, we want everyone here to have the same standards, and that’s why we’re investing in them,” Fleeman said.

And that investment is paying off. Whether it’s summer associates strengthening how they manage assignments, attorneys improving collections, or people learning to show up more effectively for clients and colleagues, skills and morale have been positively impacted.

“SkillBurst gives us more than training, it’s a way to unite people around learning, growth, and shared values,” said Ames. “Whether you’re a summer associate or a seasoned partner, these conversations remind us why we do the work. It’s been a wonderful way to reinforce our culture and invest in our people.”

Visit BARBRI.com for more information