

Professional Services

A place for words of w

Leaving a big legal or accounting firm is not necessarily the end of a big career, writes **Mark Fenton-Jones.**

General Douglas MacArthur might have determined that old soldiers never die, they just fade away, when he addressed the US Congress in 1951. But that description could not be applied to many of today's professionals.

Many practitioners in professional service firms who are about to retire are being snapped up by executive recruitment firms to help partners who have little experience in managing a crisis, like the current financial meltdown.

According to David Slessar, managing partner of executive recruitment firm Walford Partnership, mentoring is a huge growth area. He estimates that in the past 2½ years, business has more than doubled for the 10-year-old practice.

"There is also a growing awareness in firms that partners want to be able to talk to people who understand their business," he says.

"They don't feel they are getting value out of a psychologist talking about a behavioural issue. They went through the 'let's-have-a-coach-that's-a-psychologist-by-background' and that just doesn't carry any weight with partners."

Walford's development of its



David Slessar says mentoring is in demand as partners want to talk to peo

partner of Mallesons and Minter Ellison; Peter Hay, ANZ director and chairman of Carnegie Wylie.

The team has already operated mentoring programs with Price-waterhouseCoopers, KPMG, Clayton Utz and Corrs.

"In a non-confronting mentoring environment, these guys can provide

trading conditions, espec investment and finance a

"Managing out a part law firm is totally differ a manager or executive i company because you ar partners," Slessar says. be handled more profess and delicately."