

Legal Project Management: Is It Really Worth It?

Article By:

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At the recent LawVision Group LPM Roundtable meeting (a group of about 40 firms implementing LPM), [Aaron Kotok](#) from AdvanceLaw made a provocative presentation of some of the preliminary findings of the [GC Thought Leader Experiment](#). While some of the findings are not surprising (e.g., it takes work to make panels work), the very early findings on LPM turned some heads.

Compared to recent programs like the Practising Law Institute (PLI) program, [Project Management for Lawyers](#) where my co-chair for the 2018 program, [Stephanie Hamon](#), Head of External Engagement, Legal for Barclays and [Bryon Koepke](#) from Avis Budget Group described how important it is that their outside counsel use LPM techniques effectively, the early findings from the AdvanceLaw study* are mixed. On one pie chart, Aaron showed that, to date, 46% of GC's in the survey indicated that "LPM by law firms is really valuable to me." This actually seems like a pretty high percentage considering that LPM is still a new concept to many in legal departments and even partners in law firms. Many law departments are not fully aware of what LPM from their outside counsel can be and most have not worked with law firms applying LPM across many of their matters.

The finding that bothered some hearing his presentation was the quote that, based on preliminary data, "only 13% say they primarily hire law firms that excel in LPM." On first reading, this could be interpreted that the clients don't care enough about LPM if only 13% care strongly about hiring firms that excel in LPM. However, those leading firms in implementing LPM know that there are few firms that would even say they "excel in LPM" at this stage in the LPM evolution in law firms. Furthermore, even in the firms who are most advanced in LPM, they do not have all their matters using LPM approaches as it is a gradual rollout in every firm and almost no medium or larger firm has the resources to apply LPM to all their matters currently. As a result, in many firms, it is not likely clients would even see them excelling at LPM across all their matters, or even a significant portion. I think if the question were worded differently, perhaps something like "Does effective use of LPM affect your choice of counsel for matters?", it would elicit a different outcome. This is what law firms are wondering - i.e., does LPM really matter to the client's selection of counsel like some companies have mentioned in their RFPs. Even that might need to be prefaced with, "Have you experienced any law firms you work with using LPM effectively?" Before they can hire firms excelling in it, they have to know what "excelling in LPM" is and see at least some firms who are doing so.

And, what does "excel in LPM" mean? At its core, LPM for the "client"/law department involves managing matters proactively to achieve better risk management, greater value for the legal spend and more transparency/better communication to make their jobs easier. LPM can be a major factor

addressing the "what keeps you awake at night" issues for in-house professionals. LPM for a law firm means managing matters with a new approach to relationship management based on enhanced upfront communication, more planning, and greater transparency. This results in happier clients and enhanced financial management (lower write-offs/greater matter profitability).

Should these be included in defining what excelling in LPM means or something else? It may be like other topics, where "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" and it means different things to different GCs hiring counsel. The great news is that AdvanceLaw is actively collecting and analyzing additional data around LPM and, based on what they are hearing from GCs, LPM can make a really big difference in client satisfaction, if it is executed correctly. To that end, we await the next round of findings from AdvanceLaw on LPM and hope the data suggests even more GCs will have experienced positive results from the firms they work with who are implementing LPM.

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