

5 Pressing Priorities for Professional Providers (This is more than just another PR exercise)

Featured in the January 2015 edition of the [Edge International Communiqué](#)

By Jordan Furlong

PR-

If you like lists and you love alliteration, then you're probably a legal management consultant. It seems that practically every article these days by people in my line of work features a numbered list of entries that all begin with the same letter. I admit that I often do the same thing in my presentations.

What I propose to do here, however, is even more ambitious. Not only will the following list of five priorities for law firm leaders in 2015 all begin with the letters "pr," but throughout this entire article, every sentence will contain at least one word that starts with "pr." Re-read all the previous sentences and you'll see what I mean.

Presuming that you're on board with this (gimmick) approach, here are five elements of law firm strategy or infrastructure that will be critical to firms' ability to hold their own, not just against today's competitors, but tomorrow's as well.

1. **Process.** Call it systematization or business improvement or legal project management, the bottom line is that firms must take steps immediately to make their workflow and operations more streamlined and effective. Disciplined procedures for performing legal work enable your firm to both meet budgets and enhance the quality of your work. It also provides a sound basis for...
2. **Pricing.** Client demands for fixed fees or capped budgets or discounted rates all stem from the same desire: to bring more predictability to their legal spend. Your primary focus needs to be on giving clients a reliable range of fees for their tasks. But you can't just promise a flat fee without knowing exactly how much it will cost you to deliver the work. Pricing your work correctly is a condition precedent for the next important feature on this list...
3. **Profitability.** Too many law firms still measure productivity by hours billed. But a growing minority have finally accepted that the proper metric of financial health is profitability, both firm-wide and matter-specific. When firms adopt this course, prevailing assumptions inevitably give way to provocative truths. The prospect of informing powerful partners that their high-revenue client barely generates a profit can be daunting. But that simply reinforces the practical necessity of developing...
4. **Protocols.** It's easy to draft mission statements and issue grand pronouncements about your firm's culture. But when it comes to the crunch, are your leaders prepared to enforce behavioral expectations on your partners? Or even to prescribe step-by-step instructions for how work must be carried out? Peer pressure isn't enough. Top-down protocols are needed to preserve system integrity, prohibit individual variances, and promote employee morale.
5. **Proactivity.** Any firm can serve its clients' present needs. But clients are also concerned about their future prospects. How prescient are you about trends in your client's market or industry? Can you help predict their future opportunities? Or prevent impending disasters? Be proactive about identifying risks for your client before they materialize. Clients truly value lawyers who don't just solve problems, but who can anticipate and eliminate them.

Prioritize these five features, and you'll have pretty good odds of profound success in 2015 and many productive years beyond.