

Implementing Legal Project Management

By Pamela Woldow

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The rapid emergence of legal project management (LPM) as a powerful new source of energy in the legal profession resembles the discovery of fire. It's hot, it's new, and everyone is gathered around, trying to figure out how to put it to best use. Cautious types shrink from picking it up. But first-movers who dare to grab it and bend it to their will suddenly find themselves in positions of power at the head of the clan.

Stripped to its essence, legal project management is a logical sequence of activities in which a law firm and its client collaborate to agree on goals, define the value of service, allocate resources, create a realistic and comprehensible budget and action plan, develop critical work paths and performance measures, try to anticipate and limit bad surprises, and employ transparent communication protocols.

We shouldn't oversimplify LPM, because managing complex legal projects demands equally sophisticated planning and execution. But in working with clients to implement LPM training, we do try to demystify LPM as much as we can. LPM's sheer novelty and its frequent association with quantitative, IT-driven industrial project management approaches tends to generate predictable resistance among lawyers. Effective LPM training programs must respect and address this resistance.

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