

A Growing LPM Community – Part 2 in a Series: When Should You Rollout LPM to the Masses? It's About Demand

By [Susan Raridon Lambreth](#) on August 2, 2021

Whoever said go big or go home surely wasn't talking about legal project management (LPM). But maybe they should have been. Though the LPM community is growing year by year, many of the initiatives started out slowly. Yet if your firm is going to truly benefit, your LPM effort will need to scale. That doesn't mean, however, that you need to do everything all at once. It does mean that you will eventually want to include LPM beyond a few select matters.

We asked our speakers at the recent [Global LPM Summit](#) to tell us the most critical consideration a firm should have in determining when or how to roll out LPM to the masses. Much of their advice centered around relevancy and need.

Ranjit Oliver, Executive Director, Allen & Overy LLP, says that before you go for the broad rollout, you need to gather some critical information. "Spend time upfront speaking to your clients, both internal and external, to understand what they really need from legal project management."

Blandine Davies, Director of Practice Services & Head of Legal Project Management for Norton Rose Fulbright LLP, concurs, saying that law firms and law departments must focus on things that matter. "Make it relevant to your lawyers and really ensure that the approach fits...with the firm."

Virtually every firm that scales does so with a mix of training, tools and templates for "self-service" LPM and imbedded legal project managers to assist matter teams. But, how do you get this going?

Get Them to Want It

No one used this term exactly, but we would distill it down to creating demand. The need for LPM is apparent. Clients expect greater efficiency and transparency from their lawyers. They hold their law firms to higher standards of accountability as well as greater consistency and predictability in their legal expenses. Increasingly, LPM is requested in the management of their matters.

That's on the client side. But, you'll need to generate demand among the lawyers and legal professionals in your organization, as well. Before you can successfully scale LPM, you need people to be clamoring for it. But how can you get that to happen?

Where's the Pain Points?

First and foremost, find out where the pain points are. Start with your clients. If you think that they are more or less pleased with the service you provide, you may be right. On the other hand, you could be wrong. When clients leave, a recent survey shows lawyers are quick to assume that it is due to cost overruns. There may, indeed, be billing problems. But that's not likely to be the crux of the issue.

According to Thomson Reuters, clients aren't firing their outside counsel because of cost overruns. They are getting the boot because they simply aren't delivering [value and efficiency](#). That same group of in-house counsel and the lawyers who represent them claim that communication is good between them! Clearly, something isn't working.

Many law firms don't bother to ask clients what they think of the services they provide. According to [research](#), some 37 percent don't collect feedback. And while 42 percent of firms collect it casually, it's certainly not as authentic or anonymous as good feedback should be. Gentile conversations over cocktails don't always yield honest inputs.

As a leader of an LPM initiative, you can't afford to make assumptions. The best way to know what your clients need is to ask. The more specific the information you gather, the better you will be able to meet your client's demands (and motivate your lawyers). Your firm may benefit from the administration of a client satisfaction poll by an objective third party.

If you ask clients what they really need, you shouldn't be surprised to hear a list of concerns that LPM could fix:

- Greater transparency in billing
- Higher visibility into matter management
- Consistent and frequent status updates
- Faster turnaround on inquiries
- Increased certainty around costs

Ask Your Lawyers

Some firms bring in an objective third party to facilitate their internal assessment, as well. What do your lawyers actually want? What would make their lives easier and their jobs more fulfilling? By introducing objectivity into the process, you can begin to understand the 'why' behind any lingering resistance. Of course, for the sake of building strong internal coalitions for the LPM initiative, you can and should have face-to-face discussions, as well.

Before you roll out LPM on a broad scale, you must combine a strong case for the need to do things differently with solid strategies to engage your stakeholders and transform the culture. But, as Peter Drucker once said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." This is even more true in a large law firm where the average partner is making over \$1 million a year.

Luckily, however, money is a poor motivator. Your rainmaking partners are unlikely to be motivated solely by profits per partner. Few will tell you they got into law with the notion that they would ever earn so much. Rather, partners are motivated by an array of factors, among them the challenge in their work, recognition, and gratification of client success and relationships. Most are motivated, as well, by delivering value — the type of value that clients recognize and are more than willing to pay for. Ask them how you can help them get more of what they want.

LPM can give both internal and external stakeholders what they demand. You just need to find out how to best position what LPM offers. Oliver says that her team spent the time needed to determine how best to roll out LPM. "Do your due diligence," she advises.

If you missed the Summit, you can click [here](#) for more information. Be sure to read part [1](#) of this series.

Sources:

Above the Law – [Law Firms Have No Idea Why In-House Counsel Fire Them](#)

ABA Journal – [Unhappy Clients Are Hurting Your Business](#)