

A Growing LPM Community – Part 5 in a Series – Buy-in is Key to LPM Success

By [Susan Raridon Lambreth](#) on August 23, 2021

In part 5 of our series, we again have some words of wisdom from our Global LPM Summit speakers. This time the question was:

What are the keys to getting lawyers to buy-in to the idea of working with legal project managers or applying LPM on their matters?

As with any law firm change, buy-in is never a given. Yet, it's one of the key success factors for your LPM initiative. The strong attendance at this year's Summit indicates that law firms are not only gaining support for the implementation of LPM, they're seeing the benefits of their efforts.

No one can mandate LPM. If law firms are going to reap the benefits, they will do so because the lawyers and legal professionals decide that it is a business imperative. Clients are demanding greater transparency and accountability, as well as a more structured approach to bringing their matters to resolution. In fact, they are increasingly asking for and selecting law firms that apply LPM.

Many successful lawyers have done some form of project management for years. But clients want greater discipline in the form of a process that introduces consistency and reliability. They want LPM. But the way that LPM happens is when law firm management, partners, associates, and legal professionals decide to do it. That means buy-in.

Our speakers are experienced LPM leaders and they gave us some insights on how they built momentum for their law firm initiatives. Here's a synopsis of what they said.

Pick the low hanging fruit.

Mimi Eingorn, Director of Client Operations Services & Legal Project Management, Ropes & Gray, feels it's important to start with the most pressing issues. "We address pain points first, ideally by showing some good useful simple tools or best practices that we have on hand. Sharing what has worked with other lawyers has also been very effective," she says.

Tackle the easiest and most bothersome tasks first. You'll accumulate early wins that demonstrate the power of LPM. It's the best way to get the LPM ball rolling.

Build trust on the foundation of initial successes.

Talk up the early wins. Some lawyers will be early adopters and fervent supporters of LPM. As they achieve success, these lawyers provide proof and generate interest among their peers. If you can garner the support of some of the firm's most vocal and influential partners, the initiative will grow. Our speakers support this view.

Eingorn says, "Once some level of trust has been established...hopefully, because the initial steps went well, we...introduce new practices. For example, convincing the lawyer to take the time to consider the scope of a new matter before delving

in is likely to deliver quick wins. As a legal project manager, you can build on those wins.”

David Rueff, Chief Solutions Officer for Baker Donelson, agrees on the quick wins approach, adding that when lawyers see others demonstrating success, they will follow. Rueff says, “Lawyers have to see others doing it and succeeding. It’s much better when you’ve got leaders in the firm who are embracing this approach, implementing it in their matters and then talking about the successes.”

Share client feedback.

Corporate clients are telling law firms what they want. Of course, you’ll hear the complaints. But you’ll also receive the accolades. You need both because, as Liz Fernando, Head of LPM at Allens, told us, “The client feedback piece is really important.” It is. You’ll learn as much from the things that work as you do from the things that don’t.

Fernando adds, “Make sure that your lawyers..understand how the client felt about the work that you did.” When there are suggestions for improvements in the way lawyers deliver services, she says, “Take that client feedback to the partners and say, hey, we can help with this. I think that’s a really important way for us to get buy-in.”

Show them the money.

LPM helps reduce write-offs and write-downs, which can increase law firm profitability and enhance client relationships. Rueff says that the ROÍ story is one that will resonate with lawyers. Further, he points out that LPM helps ensure that lawyers get paid for their work. No one can quibble about that.

“That’s one of the key selling points that I’ve used over the years in the implementation of legal project management... every hour [lawyers] invest will be something that is going to be productive and that the client sees as valuable when you apply an LPM process,” Rueff says.

Develop champions.

You may have deep knowledge of LPM and its benefits. But it’s the lawyer-to-lawyer communication that is most influential. After all, they’re the ones delivering legal services to the client. As an LPM leader, you need peer-to-peer communication. It’s a critical success factor according to Kevin O’Sullivan, Director of LPM at Baker McKenzie.

“Definitely one of the things which has worked in our favor is partner and attorney voices speaking out on behalf of LPM based on their actual matter experiences and their successes. [This is] twice as useful as an LPM speaking on their own behalf,” Sullivan tells us.

Be an ally.

According to Blandine Davies, Director of Practice Services & Head of Legal Project Management for Norton Rose Fulbright LLP, you need to develop trust. LPM is not about telling law firm partners and lawyers how to do their jobs. It’s about giving them more time to do the value-added work and reducing some of the drudgery and repetition, while at the same time adding more to the bottom line.

“The main key for me is getting the lawyers to recognize that...you get it...they’ve been [managing] on a day-to-day basis.” It’s not about taking something they want; rather it’s about removing something they don’t. Davies continues, “You’re there to help them take away their pain points and also their clients’ pain points.”

Differentiate the firm.

Law firms that offer LPM and do it well have an advantage over firms that do not. How do we know this? Corporate clients tell us.

Rueff agrees. When you use LPM, he says, “There’s a higher probability that the work you’re performing is actually going to be valued by the client. In my opinion you’re also improving the services for the client and standing out from the competition. Those are two key elements that we have found in several of our successful implementations.”

We appreciate the Summit speakers for their great advice. Each of these speakers shared many more of their insights during the program.

As you introduce LPM into your own firm, remember that true buy-in is an active process. If you launch an LPM initiative to passive acceptance, you don’t have buy-in. You have a bunch of lawyers waiting for LPM to go away. You’ll need to actively manage the process of your LPM initiative, encourage involvement, and provide feedback. Buy-in often isn’t easy to get. But it’s well worth the effort in the payoff.

Be sure to read parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#) and [4](#) of this series.