

Are You Willing to Change?

By [Carla Landry](#) on February 18, 2014

Last month my colleague, Jessa Baker, quoted Greek philosopher Heraclitus – “Change is the only constant in life.” Jessa went on to write about adapting law firm staffing models to existing needs. She questioned why firms are hesitant to implement change in their non-attorney staffing models. Each of Jessa’s [comments](#) reminded me of the reasons firms are also hesitant to analyze their delivery of legal services (e.g., overwhelmed, afraid, easier not to, don’t want to).

Last week, I wrote an article to be published by Thomson Reuters in an upcoming quarterly newsletter called *Practice Innovations*. According to the newsletter website, *Practice Innovations* “communicates best practices and innovations in law firm information and knowledge management to legal professionals.” It’s about “managing in a changing legal environment.” There’s that pesky word again – change. My article – “Deconstruction, Reconstruction, Pricing – How Understanding the Anatomy of a Legal Matter Will Help You Identify Efficiencies and Price More Accurately” – discusses how legal process improvement techniques enable you to reduce cost and price appropriately.

Now, if a powerhouse, multi-billion-dollar, multinational corporation like Thomson Reuters publishes a newsletter about innovative legal practices, why are so many firms still afraid to embrace change? Why is there so much talk and yet limited action? There are examples of change cited in articles and other press, yet there still isn’t a widespread trend toward adapting to change. I share a case study in my article from one of the pioneers in legal process improvement, Seyfarth Shaw.

For more than four years, I have been working with firms to do things a bit differently. I started by developing programs to help lawyers understand how to manage their legal matters to a budget and ultimately increase profitability (i.e., legal project management). Today, many lawyers are managing their matters and budgets more actively. More recently, I have also been working with matter teams to analyze and improve the efficiency of their service delivery (i.e., legal process improvement). Redesigning the delivery of legal services with different resources (staffing, technology, etc.) helps maintain and even grow profits. It also distinguishes your firm as new, different and innovative...at least right now it still does. If you’re willing to look at that service delivery, you’ll likely discover that you have to adapt your staffing model to become more efficient. These levers are closely intertwined. This is why Jessa’s comments ring true in my experience as well.

As I have mentioned in previous blogs, unfortunately, even in today’s rapidly changing legal market, most law firms are still hesitant to distinguish themselves with something different. Are you willing?