

Hope for the Holidays

By [Michael D. Short](#) on December 17, 2013

As 2013 winds down, I am reminded of a few holiday season “traditions” that I can still recall from my first December working in this industry many years ago.

‘Tis still the season” for...

Collecting cash – The uneven cash flows that many firms choose to experience aren’t necessary and would not be tolerated in any other industry. For some traditional reason in the law firm world, a major effort to bill and collect a disproportionately large amount of revenue in December (while being distracted from revenue generation) is a cultural habit that is virtually impossible to break. A few firms will experience a holiday season miracle, but many Partners feel like they are dealing with Ebenezer Scrooges when trying to settle accounts receivable.

Creating an inspiring budget for next year – Many law firm leaders spend a great amount of time developing a fiscal plan that inspires greater contributions while feeling “reachable” to the partnership. While such a plan should be seen as tidings of comfort and joy for highly engaged lawyers, those who are set in their (old) ways will dismiss such efforts with a “bah-humbug.”

Having some difficult discussions – Most firms have a few Partners who are contributing at a relatively poor level, have been doing so for a few years, and are scheduled for a discussion with someone in firm leadership on the future direction of their relationship with the firm. Very few law firm leaders relish being a Grinch this time of year (as their hearts are not really two sizes too small) but managing the relative contributions of all Partners is a vital part of the job description.

I am also reminded of one more tradition that is common to all types of celebrations of the season – giving. In this spirit, our team would like to offer all of our clients and friends an invaluable gift for the rest of 2013 and beyond – hope.

Everyone deserves hope and (within the context of law firms) it is applicable to all law firms, regardless of their current situation.

- For those firms that are figuring out the new business of law and really changing their business models in alignment with client needs, there is much hope that you will continue to expand your competitive edge against those who are slow to respond. In 2014, you can maintain your momentum, broaden the application of new approaches and processes to as many Partners and matter-types as possible, and continue to take market share from those who are still trying to maintain the old ways.
- For those firms that are “flat” and trying to figure out why some other firms are taking market share, there is much hope of improvement. Truth be told, the changes that are needed to change and catch up aren’t based on rocket science. The prerequisites for moving forward are 1) a deep understanding of clients’ expectations and needs, and 2) a receptive curiosity on how the delivery of legal services can be improved for the benefit of the clients and the lawyers.

- For those firms that are losing significant market share/clients to the firms in the first group (above), there is hope that a radical restructuring plan supported by very hard work can, in fact, turn a floundering law firm around in a short period of time. This is far from easy and also requires faith in the turnaround team, the plan, and each other, but we assure you with great confidence that it is possible.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." We wish each of you and your law firms infinite hope from this point forward.

Happy holidays from The LawVision Group team.