

## How to Build and Scale Your LPM Team

By [Susan Raridon Lambreth](#) on November 30, 2021

It's a legal project management conundrum in every medium and large law firm. How do you scale your team to service the needs of both your clients and your lawyers? There simply aren't enough LPM resources to go around. Some firms have certainly given it a valiant effort, however. Baker McKenzie has the largest team with over 60 LPM professionals around the globe. Other firms have trained associates who can do double duty as legal project managers and practicing lawyers on the matter team. Still others have trained their paraprofessionals.

### How They Did it at One of Canada's Largest Law Firms

According to Mary Munro, National Director of Paraprofessional Services, paraprofessionals were a perfect fit when they decided to scale the LPM team at Borden Ladner Gervais (BLG), one of Canada's largest law firms. "The paraprofessionals are already involved in matters to a high degree, they understand the flow of matters, they understand when a matter is going off track." During a series of firmwide meetings with its paraprofessional staff, leadership heard a clear message: Paraprofessionals wanted to be more involved.

"The paraprofessional is one of the most consistent team members from beginning to end of the matter," says Munro. In fact, they were already doing some aspects of legal project management, although it hadn't been called that. The more formal and comprehensive discipline of legal project management now provides structure to their work and ties it to the partner's commercial matter management.

At BLG, one of Canada's largest law firms, paraprofessionals prepare for their roles as legal project managers using the LawVision/LPM Institutes online certification program. The program, officially known as the LPM LaunchPad Certification in the Fundamental Skills of Legal Project Management, is an essential part of their training.

The course takes just three to four hours to complete. Upon completion, each participant submits a Scope of Work document and Project Plan. The Project Plan work output includes a schedule, work breakdown structure, resource assignment, communications plan, risk analysis, change management plan, and budget. Once these documents are reviewed and approved, the paraprofessional receives their certificate.

The firm takes it a step further, also providing its own training for the paraprofessionals in other aspects of commercial matter management, such as financial levers and the business side of the law firm. As the firm continues to build its team of legal project managers, they are developing playbooks to ensure that LPM remains efficient as the team expands. They also provide a boot camp to enhance and reinforce the paraprofessional's new LPM skills.

BLG's clients reap the benefits. Clients are willing to pay for trained and dedicated legal project management at a reasonable rate. In most cases, the partner or even a senior associate will be priced higher than a paraprofessional. Firm leaders believe that by training paraprofessionals they will be able to manage budgets effectively and keep clients happier using LPM whenever possible. And when the budget must change, LPM offers the transparency and early notification that clients appreciate.

## Firm Improvements Through LPM

BLG launched the program with 45 paraprofessionals earlier this year. A second cohort is in process of finishing the certification this fall. So what's happened at the firm in the first six months? Since that time, they have been able to:

- Leverage the materials from the LaunchPad course to create work breakdown structures (WBSs) and budgets for new matters;
- Develop custom task codes and matter plans for certain practices with high volume, repetitive type of matters;
- Increase understanding by the paraprofessionals of the financial side of the matters, including the impact on leverage, realization, scope changes, and more.

Perhaps equally important, the firm has created a career path for paraprofessionals that provides greater responsibility and more client-facing opportunities. This, in turn, generates a higher level of engagement and job satisfaction. That's no small matter in the current war for talent law firms are facing.

## More Successes to Come

BLG is just one of the firms using the LPM LaunchPad certification course or the LPMAware basic education on legal project management to train their lawyers and staff. We will profile others in future articles.

Just a reminder – [click here](#) for the series of articles we published on the Global LPM Summit that took place in June. If you missed the Summit, you purchase replays for everyone in your entire firm or LPM team by contacting [eva.booth@lawvision.com](mailto:eva.booth@lawvision.com). Plan ahead to attend the next Global LPM Summit in 2022. [Click here](#) to receive updates.

In the interim, consider taking a course on LPM. You can access a free 90-minute session on LPM on MyLawCLE as part of their Mini MBA for Attorneys. Use our access code LawVision21 for free access. You can also take an online or virtual live LPM certification course. Information about these courses is here ([online](#) or [virtual](#)).