

## Is Legal Project Management a Potential Solution to Creating Effective Teams?

By [Carla Landry](#) on January 15, 2013

Recently, I have been trying to think of ideas to promote improved teamwork in the legal environment. This was, in part, in response to my colleague's blog last December on "[Solving the Great Partner Compensation Puzzle – Promoting Teamwork](#)." Mike Short writes that he is asked by managing partners on a frequent basis is "how can I incentivize a key to our strategic success – teamwork....?"

In pursuit of ideas, I researched how other industries incent teamwork. In a classic case of being buried in the research, I failed to see what was right in front of me. Having worked with my colleague, Susan Lambreth, to develop effective legal project management training programs, I knew that teamwork was at the core of successful project management. Nonetheless, the research was a good reminder and, in some cases, revealing.

Many articles, academic offerings, and several products caught my attention. Some of them had language that went right to the point. Some of the titles, e.g., "Utilizing Teamwork in Project Management" and "What Actions can the Project Manager Take to Ensure Effective Teamwork," screamed a reminder to me that legal project management is all about communication and teamwork. I even found academic courses, e.g., "Project Management Communications and Teamwork," that simply state the link between them.

One product that struck me immediately was Teamwork™ Project Manager. The name alone says plenty. Although the product is not legal industry focused, as I scanned their website certain things stood out. It started on the home page – "Teamwork Project Manager is an easy-to-use online teamwork & project management software application that helps managers, staff and clients work together more productively online." Digging a bit deeper, I find:

"Allowing everybody to see exactly what they have to do and when they have to have it done by"

"Keep everybody on the project informed about key dates and goals"

It is a common belief that a team is bound together by a shared goal. This brings me back to Mike's blog. When Mike mentions the opportunity to give your firm's lawyers new "rules" for setting their compensation, he offers including "a team-oriented goal or two that will materially grow the pie beyond the sum of all Partners' *individual* contributions. This is usually achieved by assembling teams and giving them a specific goal...."

I suggest that if legal project management allows everybody to see what they have to do and when and if it keeps everybody on the project informed about goals, then there's a solution to the issue of teamwork in the legal environment. It lies in legal project management. If we know we can measure the success of strong legal project management skills and we can identify write offs/downs that can be significantly reduced with improved legal project management techniques ("RFPs/Surveys Show Clients are Demanding Legal Project Management," Susan Lambreth, published January 2013), it should be straight forward to reward strong project management skills.

Now, we have to ask, are you willing to pay your partners to be good legal project managers?

