

## LPM: How to Like the Actions and Get the Results

By [Carla Landry](#) on May 23, 2022

Law firms that figure out how to successfully execute Legal Project Management follow a familiar pattern. It's similar to the way we build good habits in our lives: we rinse and repeat. The behaviors you repeat tend to become habits. When you thoughtfully design LPM with duplicable and predictable processes, they, too, can become habits.

But what makes some habits sticky and others not so much? It's ridiculously easy to build bad habits. Just think about the things you do on vacation, like eat junky foods or indulge in poolside margaritas every day. Once you return home, it can be difficult to break the pattern.

As James Clear, author of the book, *Atomic Habits: An Easy and Proven Way to Build Good Habits and Break Bad Ones*, tells us, these good habits have an inherent problem. The problem is that the reward is delayed.

### Bad Habits are Easy

Not so with bad habits. When you eat that glazed chocolate donut, the reward is immediate. You get your sugar fix and it tastes great. But even worse? The consequences of your action are delayed. You may find that you crash a little a few hours later, but it will take weeks, or even years, for the long-term ramifications of an unhealthy habit to catch up with you.

Sure, you can eat the apple. That's a good habit. But here's the problem: the good outcomes that accrue from a good habit are delayed as much as the bad consequences of a bad habit. So in search of the next high, we oftentimes choose the bad.

### Bring Rewards Closer

What's the solution? Rewards. Rewards help us appreciate the fruits of our labor, apples included. The point is that we repeat the little things that we like. We like being rewarded. We just need to bring the rewards a little closer.

According to Clear, you can change long-term behavior through short-term feedback. This is something that list-makers of the world understand. Meta COO, Sheryl Sandberg, is known for carrying a spiral notebook. She jots down everything she needs to do each day and tears out pages once everything has been completed.

For Sandberg, the notebook provides short-term feedback and the satisfaction of physically ripping out a page and tossing it in the trash. If you use a to-do list, you can relate.

What does this have to do with LPM? If you want to successfully implement LPM in your firm, you start by building good habits within your team. The final stage of building atomic habits is liking. Find ways to consistently repeat – and enjoy – what works. Liking requires repetition. When we are rewarded, we are satisfied that what we are doing matters. More importantly, we do it again.

The long-term benefits of LPM are tremendous. But it's just as important to celebrate small victories by recognizing milestones along the way. Business leaders use goal-tracking sheets because they work. Also, remember that people at all levels of the firm like to feel appreciated and recognized for their contributions. Remember to be specific about the

behavior you are rewarding.

## Final Thoughts

Habits are powerful, and atomic habits even more so. Atomic habits are the regular routines that are small and easy to do. They are powerful, however, and they provide proof of who you are. If you see yourself as a leader, it's because you have evidence to back it up. The evidence is in the actions that you take more often than not. It's not about being perfect all the time. To change bad habits to good, you need a system.

LPM systematizes what you do, allowing the development of great habits. The steps that you take get you closer to the identity you want to create.

This series includes:

[Part 1](#): We introduced best-selling author James Clear. According to Clear, building new habits requires noticing, wanting, doing and liking. We used his concept of Atomic Habits to propose that incremental improvements in LPM delivered over the long run can make a major difference in your firm's outcomes.

[Part 2](#): You will never change the things that aren't working until you notice the problem. Your firm could rise to the level of its goals or fall to the level of its systems.

[Part 3](#): When it comes to LPM, wanting is the desire to get rid of inefficient and ineffective processes. These add little value for clients.

[Part 4](#): This is the point where you stop intellectualizing and start doing the things that yield positive outcomes. It requires that you have taken the steps to create an environment that is conducive to success.

In this final part 5, we have discussed liking. This is the last but most critical stage for the institutionalization of new habits. Conventional wisdom tells us that people will generally do what benefits them. They will cease doing the things they don't enjoy absent the presence of a big stick. Fortunately, we don't need to use punitive measures when we have atomic habits.

According to Clear, "The goal is not to run a marathon, it is to become a runner." You can apply this philosophy to your practice. You don't have to run the entire 26.2 next week, or even next month. The goal is not to be a project manager. The goal is to use the best of legal project management to start building the habits that lead to excellence in your practice group. That's what LPM does.