

# LPM is Change for the New Economic Reality: Part Four of a Four-Part series

By [Carla Landry](#) on September 11, 2020

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## **People and Legal Project Management**

At the end of the day, LPM is about how people perform their jobs. Period. You can install some fancy new technologies and implement even more souped-up processes. But there is no LPM without people. If you're going to deliver value, you'll need to capture the hearts and minds of the people who comprise your firm.

Long gone are the days when employees did things just because you said so. And thankfully so. Because the more you engage your lawyers and your staff in the LPM initiative, the better your outcomes will be. As mentioned throughout this series, LPM done right will transform your firm and yield a competitive advantage that surprises and delights your clients. In case I haven't said it strongly enough, LPM has the power to transform. But you'll need to tap into the power of the people.

That's the topic of this final installment. Here are three areas that you can focus on to ensure that people — arguably, the most important element of transformational change — fully support the success of your LPM initiative.

### **1. Find sponsors who are committed to LPM.**

It's one thing to talk the talk. It's quite another to match your actions to your words. The most successful LPM initiatives have leaders who are vested in the project's success. Sponsors have an important role. Although they don't manage any part of the project, they help to create a climate where LPM can succeed. As such, your sponsor should be an executive committee member or come from the partnership ranks. If your sponsor already believes in LPM, great. If not, you'll need to present a strong business case... and keep presenting it until you have an evangelist.

Identify your sponsor and meet with them early on. Encourage the sponsor to be involved as much as possible. Don't worry that it's too much. The most effective sponsors are already busy, so you must find ways to keep them engaged and involved. You want to make sure they don't lose interest or are distracted by other priorities. Invite your sponsor to speak at your project kick-off meeting, attend an occasional team gathering, or test run your training.

In order for a sponsor to be effective, they must be:

- Ready to use their significant influence to drive the right behaviors
- Able to either commit resources or persuade others to commit resources
- Eager to visibly and vocally support the efforts and achievements of the LPM team
- Available to resolve conflicts and advocate across departments when necessary

**2. Ensure that rewards encourage the desired outcomes.**

If there is a mismatch between what your firm asks people to do and the actual outcomes, there's probably a very good reason. It's likely that the wrong behaviors are being rewarded. Sure, sometimes people do things that make no sense. And there are plenty of arguments that say that carrots and sticks don't actually work. But if you honestly examine the reward systems in your law firm, you will probably find that lawyers and staff generally do what they are incentivized to do.

In order to ensure that the rewards match the LPM outcomes, you'll want to clearly define your objectives in advance. Then ask both your team and your sponsors how best to encourage the necessary actions. Make sure that all of your systems are aligned to meet your goals. This includes how the firm rewards and promotes, as well as assigns matters.

Change the systems that need to be changed. Nothing is too sacred to ignore. And memorialize everything. If you are to realize the full benefits of LPM, you cannot rely on tribal memory. Neglecting to take these important steps may mean that any changes you make will be temporary at best.

**3. Train your people before time and just-in-time.**

If you expect LPM to become business-as-usual, you need to invest in training. There will be some heavily institutionalized habits to overcome. These habits exist at every level of the firm and they are part of the culture. You'll need to ensure that all of the people involved in LPM have bought into the goals and objectives of the initiative.

Of course, this includes project managers and leads. But it also includes other lawyers and staff who may play tangential roles. They may not need project management skills per se, but they do need to understand how LPM supports firm values, what it means to clients, and how the firm will attain success.

Do not train technical skills too far in advance. People may forget what they learned and never give LPM a fair chance. Some will never admit that they have forgotten how to do the thing or that they didn't get it the first time. If you need to, provide self-directed refresher training.

As mentioned, clients, if they were demanding before the economic downturn, will be even more demanding now. I've given you some tools to get started. There's no better time than the present.

One of the best things about LPM implementation is that it's easy to be transparent and honest about what it entails. Focus on your objectives. Clients will get what they want. Life will go on. It's important to demonstrate to people — your lawyers and staff — the way to succeed. It's a big job, but if you do it correctly, they will make it happen.

This concludes our four-part series.

[Part I](#)

[Part II](#)

[Part III](#)