LPM: Wanting to Get Rid of Zombie Processes

By Carla Landry on March 18, 2022

In Atomic Habits: An Easy and Proven Way to Build Good Habits and Break Bad Ones, the author, James Clear discussed the four stages of habit formation. They include noticing, wanting, doing, and liking. In Part II of this series, LPM: Have You *Noticed* Your Profits, we discussed the first step. According to Clear's theory, you are unable to change your habits until you notice what you're doing.

Of course, that's easier said than done, particularly when you consider the large number of smaller steps that go into the many processes that lawyers follow. Not only can it be difficult to notice the little steps, we oftentimes don't realize that we're in the middle of a process, particularly when things aren't working. A process is simply a series of steps that we follow to get to an endpoint. A large number of processes go into, for example, a contract dispute.

Team members may lament that there is no process. But even bad processes are still processes. They are just broken. A bad process is repetitive, error-prone, and adds little value for clients. In layman terms for techno-speak, a zombie process is one that consists of leftover scraps of dead processes that need to be cleaned up.

In other words, programs that create zombie processes are not properly written. They are not efficient and they fail to accomplish the intended result. Let's appropriate a computer term and claim it for the legal arena, shall we? Zombie processes in the legal industry mean the inefficient use of highly capable resources. As a result of these often haphazard processes, lawyers and legal professionals may encounter:

- Unmanageable bottlenecks;
- Unnecessarily long hours performing tedious tasks;
- Stress, overwork, and frustration;
- Missed deadlines;
- Degradation of quality; and most important of all
- Disgruntled clients.

Out with Zombie Processes

None of these things need to happen. When you have processes in place to manage the workload and the resources, magical things start to happen. These processes, however, require LPM. But before you can get the endorsement, LPM must be something that at least some of the partners, lawyers, and legal professionals in your firm are willing to support. Build it for success and the others will come.

Step two in Clear's atomic habits process is wanting. Once lawyers notice that things are not running as smoothly as they could be, they must want to make changes. That's desire. It can get your LPM effort moving forward. But that's not all it can do. Desire is self-perpetuating. It's like the old Lay's potato chip commercial: Betcha can't eat just one. Only these are *good* habits that perpetuate. Little successes in LPM beget other little successes, so that firmwide change can happen one step at a time.

Wanting is what you need to propel your LPM initiative forward. In the firms where it's working well, LPM is a series of good habits, good processes that perpetuate. LPM takes the guesswork and the decision-making out of processes. When processes run smoothly, it's nearly magical. As Clear puts it, you can be the architect of your environment by designing "something to make your good behaviors easier and your bad behavior more difficult."

LPM Makes Good Behaviors Easy

When you want to ensure that you read a little each night before going to sleep, place the book on your nightstand, or better still, on top of the pillow. Want to work out each morning? Sleep in your workout clothes and put your shoes by the bed. Want to make better eating choices? Fill the 'fridge full of healthy fruits and vegetables and put a bowl of apples on the counter.

It's easy to make better choices easier. But unless you take deliberate action, all good intentions can easily slip away and be replaced by zombie processes. LPM provides the blueprint for making good decisions. It's not something that lawyers typically develop on their own. Granted, many partners do some form of project management. It doesn't necessarily save them from the negative impacts of bad processes, however. That's because most of the organic methods of managing projects fail to incorporate enough good behaviors to make the bad behaviors difficult to do for the team members involved.

With LPM, that's no longer an issue. LPM is structured and deliberate. We notice that both project teams and clients find that the work is more efficient and the communication easier using LPM techniques. In Part 4 of the series, we'll cover doing. If you missed Part 1 and Part 2 of this series, you can read them here.