

Smart Workforce Strategies to Weather the Pandemic Storm

By [Susan Raridon Lambreth](#) on September 14, 2020

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As law firms have implemented their work-from-home (WFH) efforts, three segments of the legal professional groups have emerged. For brevity, we've called them: The Taxed, The Redeployables, and The Instructables. Each segment presents a unique challenge, requiring a customized approach that keeps the workforce feeling engaged and supported. A one-size-fits-all approach to these segments could not only damage morale, it could slow your recovery.

The Taxed

The Taxed are fee earners who are busier now than they were in the recent past. This includes lawyers or paralegals in areas of practice where changes driven by the pandemic have increased the demand for their services.

First and foremost, ensure that the Taxed are knowledgeable about internal resources available to support them such as technology that could boost efficiency and perhaps, more importantly, human resources such as LPM and practice group management resources, as examples. For example, your LPM team can reach out to the Taxed and let them know that project management techniques can help them:

- Manage the higher workload;
- Meet or beat client deadlines;
- Establish realistic expectations with clients.

If you don't have LPM resources, you can deploy outside consultants. They can help your busiest matter teams stay on track and maintain profitability (even under new financial arrangements with clients). You may also be able to re-deploy lawyers or other fee earners from slower practices to overburdened ones.

The Redeployables

The Redeployable professionals are in practices dramatically affected in negative ways by the pandemic. At the practice level, management should look at opportunities for the Redeployables to learn new skills which might include cross-training in another practice area or providing a value-added service such as legal operations consulting or legal project management. Those who are less busy can also be developing model documents, templates for efficient matters or process maps to position the firm to demonstrate greater efficiency to clients and to improve the firm's profit margins.

Downtime can also be an opportunity to encourage people to develop new skills through online training. One of the four keys to employee engagement is the development of mastery or competence – which they can gain through training. When the firm invests in the Redeployables, it sends a clear signal that they are valued. In turn, these new skills enable them to provide additional value to the firm and its clients as the economy stabilizes.

Online training opportunities vary depending on the person's current role and interests. But three that are particularly

salient in the current market include legal project management, legal technology and business development. As the demand for paralegals and legal secretaries declined, some firms retrained these valuable professionals in LPM even prior to the pandemic. These firms recognized early on how critical the role of project manager would ultimately become. Other firms cross-trained their marketing team in LPM. For associates, adding an [LPM credential](#) can help them become the managing attorney on a matter team.

The Instructables

The Instructables include some of the firm's business professionals who are not fully busy during this time. As firms discuss potential layoffs, this group is likely concerned about their future. WFH presents a golden opportunity for upskilling Instructables in the areas above. Training now only helps boost morale; it helps them gain marketable skills for the future.

If you're ready for online training options right now to upskill your professionals if they have downtime, LawVision offers both LPM [certification \(LaunchPad\)](#) and LPM overview ([LPMAware](#)) programs in addition to other online courses.

Stability via Structure

Responding to the needs of each segment should provide a level of comfort to those who are experiencing unprecedented levels of uncertainty and anxiety. Having tailored approaches for each segment can enable the firm to maintain higher morale and productivity.

About the Author: Susan Lambreth has over 25 years of experience as a consultant to the legal profession. Ms. Lambreth has helped almost half of the largest firms in the U.S. implement strong practice group management or train their Practice Group Leaders. She has trained over 5,000 lawyers, who hold firm or practice management roles, how to lead and manage more effectively. She also assists firms in implementing effective legal project management initiatives and training. She has co-chaired the largest conference in the world on LPM for each of the past 10 years. In 2019, she was awarded "best LPM educator" by the True Value Partnering Institute (TVPI). She co-created with a colleague the first legal project management certification program and launched the first online eLearning courses in legal project management. Ms. Lambreth is author of three books on practice group management and three on legal project management.