LPM, or Legal Project Management, is one of the latest phrases to be added to the lawyer’s lexicon, and part of the broad sweeping changes in the practice of law. What is it, and how is it changing the practice of law?

Just like the name implies, it is a disciplined process with five predefined steps for managing litigation or transactional matters that is designed to deliver legal services better, faster and cheaper. Its magic, to the extent there is magic to it, is in the process itself, which creates a partnership between the client and outside counsel, and aligns their interests at the outset. It is variable in that it can and should be tailored to meet the different needs of each client, and is scalable depending upon the size of the matter, but it follows a predefined process to deliver excellent client service in every case every time.

The five step process of LPM is more easily remembered through the acronym S-P-I-E-L:

**S**cope the Project

**P**lan the Project

**I**mplement the Agreed Upon Statement of Work

**E**valuate the Project

**L**earn from the Project

**SCOPE** the Project: This step identifies the phases of the project, the necessary tasks in each phase, and the deadlines for those tasks. At this stage, it is important to identify both the necessary tasks as well as the tasks that are excluded from the scope, all of which is done in consultation with the client. This step culminates in a draft Statement of the Scope of Work.

**PLAN** the Project: The PLAN flows directly from the SCOPE by adding the staff and price to each task identified in the SCOPE. LPM uses data from prior matters and may involve pricing strategists, to develop a budget with realistic estimates of the hours needed to accomplish the tasks. LPM can be used for a capped fee arrangement, a flat fee arrangement or any variety of arrangements that meet the client’s needs, including the traditional billable hour with a more reliable budget. The client and the lawyer discuss the draft Statement of the Scope of Work including the proposed budget with the goal of reaching an Agreed Upon Statement of Work. If material issues arise that are unexpected or outside the scope of the PLAN, LPM uses a “change order” much like the construction industry to make any necessary adjustments.

**IMPLEMENT** the Agreed Upon Statement of Work: All aspects of the work are monitored including the completion of tasks, communications with the client, and actual fees compared to budgeted fees to identify any variances and allow for corrective action as soon as possible if necessary.

**EVALUATE** the Project: This step requires an honest and critical examination of all aspects of the Project. It includes capturing significant work product developed during the Project for use in the future, as well as a comparison of actual costs to budgeted costs to improve accuracy of the budget in future cases.
LEARN from the Project: This final step identifies the lessons learned, and those lessons are translated into improved processes, efficiencies, or changes that may avoid litigation, reduce claims or save costs in the future. This might include additional training needs, a change in policy, or a more tailored document retention policy, for example.

Why LPM? Traditional ways of managing litigation or transactions—based upon the unlimited billable hour, estimates that are no more than educated guesses, with no upfront discussion about how the matter will be managed or who will do the work—fail to meet the needs of in-house counsel who are being pressured to do more with less, and with greater predictability. LPM relies upon familiar concepts but applies them in a new way to deliver better legal services through cost-effective pricing, more efficient management of legal projects, and predictability. Moreover, LPM captures reusable work product, and allows the client to capitalize on gained efficiencies. Most importantly, it encourages collaboration, and raises the bar on client service by aligning the interests of the client and the lawyer at all stages.

With increased pressure to provide a wider range of services using less resources and in less time, in-house counsel are looking to lawyers who employ LPM to streamline workflow, eliminate inefficiencies, and provide more predictability in budgeting. LPM enables the outside lawyer to deliver exactly what the client needs, when they need it and within budget.

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