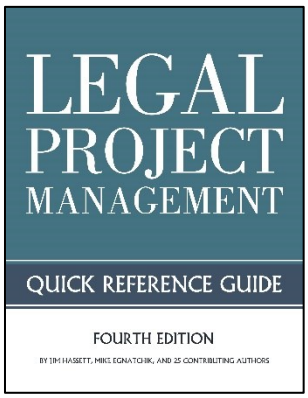
# Legal Project Management Quick Reference Guide
# Fourth Edition

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412 pages, paperback, 8.5 x 11

The first three editions of this book have been purchased by firms with over 100,000 lawyers

This fourth edition adds over 150 pages of new tools and templates

## *by Jim Hassett, Mike Egnatchik, and 25 contributing authors*

*Stacy D. Ballin, Squire Patton Boggs*
*Steve Barrett, LegalBizDev*
*Tim Batdorf, LegalBizDev*
*Ed Burke, LegalBizDev*
*Natasha Chetty, LegalBizDev*
*Tom Clay, Altman Weil*
*Jonathan Cooper, Tucker Ellis*
*Stuart J T Dodds, Baker & McKenzie*
*Ann Lee Gibson, Ann Lee Gibson Consulting*
*Jonathan Groner, LegalBizDev PR Specialist*
*Liz Harris, Harris Cost Lawyers*
*Byron S. Kalogerou, McDermott Will & Emery*
*Tom Kane, LegalBizDev*
*Judith Droz Keyes, Davis Wright Tremaine*
*Fred Kinch, LegalBizDev*
*Patrick J. Lamb, Valorem Law Group*
*Gary Richards, LegalBizDev*
*Richard G. Rosenblatt, Morgan Lewis*
*Paul Saunders, Stewart McKelvey*
*Michelle H. Stein, LegalBizDev*
*Brent Timmons, BrazeauSeller*
*Sverre Tyrhaug, Thommessen*
*Scott N. Wagner, Bilzin Sumberg*
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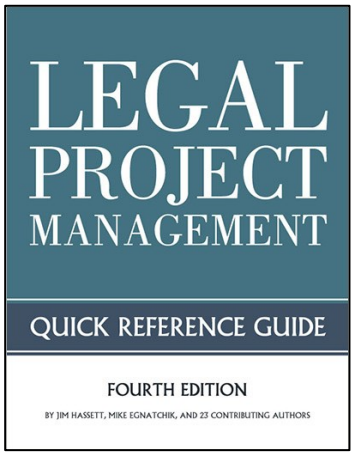


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About LegalBizDev

# What experts are saying about the fourth edition

"**Every partner should use this book**, regardless of their level of expertise. With prices being pushed down, the number one question lawyers ask me today is: How can I live within more stringent budgets without reducing quality? The *Legal Project Management Quick Reference Guide* helps answer this question with an impressive array of management tactics and templates… On the first page the authors say 'Please do not read this book.' This is truly a reference guide, so instead of having to plow through volumes of material, a reader can get value very quickly. I especially like the checklists which are well thought-out and very practical. Busy lawyers will be able to easily use this important resource."

*– Toby Brown,*
*Chief Practice Management Officer, Perkins Coie*

"If you are truly interested in legal project management, this book should be on your desk. It is comprehensive, thorough, and very detailed. This *Guide* provides a blueprint for how to combine the highest quality legal work with the efficiency that today's clients are rightfully demanding. **A must read**!"

*– Vincent A. Cino,*
*Chairman, Jackson Lewis, P.C.*

"I have often referred to the third edition of the *Legal Project Management Quick Reference Guide* as **my 'LPM bible**.' The expanded and updated fourth edition is even better and I've used it almost every day since I received it. I especially love the way it treats LPM as a toolbox. The tools that are most useful may vary from one lawyer to another and even from one matter to another. This book makes it easy for each lawyer to find exactly the information they need, right when they need it."

*– Melissa Prince,*
*Director of Pricing and Legal Project Management, Ballard Spahr*

"There is **no better resource available** than the *Legal Project Management Quick Reference Guide* to enable practitioners to increase client satisfaction and win business by implementing meaningful change in the way they plan and execute engagements. The imperative that lawyers re-engineer the way they practice and provide greater efficiency and cost certainty to clients has been discussed repeatedly since the onset of the financial crisis. It is no longer subject to question or debate. This book explains how to meet this need and convert 'would haves' and 'should haves' into action."

*– David Fries, Senior Advisor, Pricing & Practice Management,*
*Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP*

"The fourth edition of the *Legal Project Management Quick Reference Guide* is a great book which **just keeps getting better.** It will be quite useful for lawyers not just in law firms but also in law departments."

*– Howard Kaufman,*
*Counsel, Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP*

"The number one thing we hear clients asking for these days is to provide greater value. This will require attorneys to have a firm grasp of LPM. For beginners, the *Legal Project Management Quick Reference Guide* provides **quick entry to project management concepts**. For attorneys who have been using LPM techniques for years, this book will help them improve further, building on their experience. Every law firm should be looking towards the future, and the efficiencies gained through LPM will lead to greater value for clients and better profitability for the firm."

*– Christopher Fryer,*
*Chief Information Officer, Hanson Bridgett LLP*

"The fourth edition **includes many improvements**, especially to the chapters entitled 'Assign Tasks and Manage the Team' and 'Negotiate Changes of Scope.' One of the book's contributing authors is coaching one of our lawyers right now on a litigation that changes like a chameleon, and we are putting the new scope material to work. It has helped to keep our client informed and happy and to reduce write-offs."

*– Geoff Goldberg,*
*Chief Advancement Officer, McCarter & English LLP*

"**As a managing member, I plan to use this book on a regular basis**. I especially liked the checklists and the way it includes the very succinct but helpful articles from other contributors throughout the book."

*– Ellen Cappellanti,*
*Managing Member, Jackson Kelly*

"This book not only provides the reader as thorough and practical treatment of legal project management as I've read, it also provides **a comprehensive blueprint on how to get started** incorporating legal project management into your practice."

*– Patrick Whalen,*
*Chairman, Spencer Fane LLP*

"We are embarking on a project management initiative and I need to train some of my staff on the key elements of project management. There is **no better starting point** than the *Legal Project Management Quick Reference Guide*. It distills the important issues in a way that is not overwhelming to someone new to the project management world."

*– Paul Levy,*
*Chief Financial Officer, Saul Ewing LLP*

"The variety and expertise of the numerous contributing authors makes this **book a 'must read' for everyone involved in LPM**. The checklist format, clear chapter organization, and lists of questions to be used every day in real work situations all add to the book's value."

*– Michael Chivell,*
*Managing Partner, Armstrong Teasdale LLP*

"This book is an excellent resource which contains an enormous amount of relevant material on what firms are doing about LPM now and what they should do in the future. It includes **a great deal of thoughtful commentary** on issues that those of us who are serious about LPM have been grappling with for some time."

*– Carl W. Herstein,*
*Chief Value Partner, Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn LLP*

"This is **a great resource** for anyone interested in LPM. The *Guide* lays out practically-minded, straightforward steps that lawyers can take to implement project management discipline into their practice. The fourth edition has done a nice job of continuing to improve upon an already comprehensive guide."

*– Nolan Kurtz,*
*Chief Operating Officer, Buchanan, Ingersoll & Rooney*

"The *Legal Project Management Quick Reference Guide* is a great reference for anyone looking to improve their matter planning and management capabilities. It is **my "go to" guide** for partners, associates, and staff members looking for a simple, informative resource for managing matters. It is an easy read that offers helpful, tactical guidance. The templates in the *Guide* are straightforward and sections are laid out to be used either comprehensively or piecemeal, as needed for each matter."

*– Bart Gabler,*
*Director of Pricing and Legal Project Management, K&L Gates*

"I particularly liked the chapter on 'Managing Client Communications,' especially the very practical list of questions for lessons learned reviews and client value conversations. Client debriefs are an underutilized source of valuable feedback to guide and improve client relationships, and this book provides **a variety of tools** and advice to help conduct them."

*– Andréa Danziger,*
*Director, Business Development and Practice Management, Loeb & Loeb*

"This **excellent resource** includes a wide variety of tools to help lawyers offer high quality services to clients more efficiently and cost-effectively."

*– Delilah Flaum,*
*Partner in Charge of KM and LPM, Winston & Strawn LLP*

"This book is terrific. I have found it **very user-friendly and accessible**. The tone is spot-on for busy lawyers and law firm personnel, especially the bullets, checklists, and sample questions."

*– Kaitlin Verber,*
*Knowledge Management Counsel, Latham & Watkins LLP*

"I particularly liked the **concrete examples** throughout the book of checklists and tools for both transactional lawyers and for litigators."

*– Julia Hilliker,*
*Partner, Hodgson Russ LLP*

"The checklists, tools, and templates in this book will be **useful to every practicing lawyer**. This practical guide includes numerous sections written by true innovators in LPM and AFAs and does a great job of referring the reader to other valuable information."

*– Kelly Kiernan Largey,*
*Chief Marketing Officer, Fish & Richardson*

"**A great compilation of real-world examples**. The writing team did a fantastic job. The substantially reduced price of the fourth edition will also make this book much more accessible to a wider audience."

*– Emily Wesson,*
*Legal Project Manager, Norton Rose Fulbright*

"**Every lawyer interested in LPM should read and use this book.** It is self-explanatory and quite helpful. I've found myself in many of the situations described in the book and the examples and explanations in this book will be extremely helpful in avoiding future problems."

*– Maren Stadler-Tjan,*
*Senior Associate, Arendt & Medernach*

"The *Legal Project Management Quick Reference Guide* is **a must-have reference** for any lawyer looking to improve their efficiency. This is the first place I go for strategies and ideas to implement LPM at our firm. I've used many of the suggestions and checklists in creating our own internal best practices guides."

*– Robert Parker,*
*Practice Group/Client Matter Management Administrator, Quarles & Brady*

# Excerpt: The first few pages from the fourth edition

## INTRODUCTION: HOW TO USE THIS QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Please do not read this book.

This *Quick Reference Guide* is an encyclopedia of techniques to help lawyers become more efficient. Very few people read encyclopedias cover to cover. If you are tempted to take the time to read every word in this book, please remember that merely reading about LPM will not make anyone more efficient. This book is designed to help you change your behavior and deliver greater value by quickly identifying the tactics that will have the greatest impact on your practice and adapting them to meet your needs.

Legal project management (LPM) increases client satisfaction and firm profitability by applying proven techniques to improve the management of legal matters. It is not a simple set of steps that lawyers should apply to every case or matter, but rather a toolbox which includes a broad array of procedures and templates. Each lawyer must find the tools and tactics that will have the greatest impact for them.

If you are using this *Guide* in one of our coaching programs, your coach will help you to navigate the book based on the challenges you face, such as:

- ❑ Clients refusing to pay for work you've billed
- ❑ Writing off work that was performed before it was billed to the client
- ❑ Clients demanding deep discounts
- ❑ Clients being unhappy when they are surprised by unexpected developments or fees
- ❑ Clients feeling "out of the loop" or uninformed
- ❑ Difficulty meeting deadlines
- ❑ Team members who are not as productive as you'd like
- ❑ Team members who charge more to a project than you would expect
- ❑ Inability to know where your budget stands until it is too late
- ❑ Clients assigning you a budget or imposing tight cost constraints on your work
- ❑ Too much work and too little time

If you are a practicing attorney who is using the book without a coach, start by selecting a key client or matter. Then turn to the list of eight key issues in legal project management on the back cover (or see the expanded list below) and select one issue as your best place to start. Then stop reading this introduction and turn directly to the chapter for that issue. Scan

the list of topics at the start of the chapter for tools that fit your situation, pick one that sounds promising, and try it. If it works, do more. If it doesn't, try something else.

If you help manage a practice group or your entire firm, you may already believe that your lawyers could benefit from LPM but don't know where to start. In that case, keep reading this introduction. It will help you find the talking points you need to discuss LPM with internal champions and begin planting the seeds of change.

When the first edition of this *Guide* appeared in 2010, LPM was a brand new field and this was the only book devoted to the practical details of "how to do it." Since then, LPM has grown so rapidly that we have published three more editions. This fourth edition includes over 150 pages of new tools and templates developed by our team and by our clients to increase efficiency.

Our examples draw on a rich and deep body of knowledge that project managers have developed over the last several decades to help businesses run more efficiently. This book describes and adapts the tactics that lawyers find most useful and ignores the rest.

Exactly what should YOU do to benefit from all this knowledge? If you had enough time to get a master's degree in project management, you could consider all the possibilities at length. But the truth is you probably had trouble finding the time to read this far. So we suggest that you jump right in: identify a challenge, look at the list of eight issues, and turn to that chapter.

The good news about LPM is that the billable hour has created an enormous amount of inefficiency and low hanging fruit—areas where lawyers can instantly increase efficiency simply by adopting proven best practices. This book will show you how. It provides easy access to hundreds of ideas that other lawyers have found useful so you can discover for yourself what will work best for you.

The innovative tools in this guide will help you gain an advantage in today's highly competitive marketplace. All you have to do is use them.

## EIGHT KEY ISSUES IN LEGAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Our approach, and the entire organization of this book, is based on thinking about LPM in terms of the eight key issues listed on the back cover and described in this section. Note that these are not steps in an inflexible process, but rather underlying topics that interrelate to each other in complex ways as a matter proceeds.

### *Defining the eight key issues*

| Chapter | Key Issue | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Set objectives and define scope | You must define your assumptions and specify exactly what is included in the assignment and what is not. It is often useful to specify certain important things that are not included. |
| 2 | Identify and schedule activities | After scope is clearly defined, break down a complex matter into smaller tasks and schedule them. |
| 3 | Assign tasks and manage the team | To maximize efficiency, the right people must be assigned to the right tasks, team members must understand the project's scope and their responsibilities, and performance must be monitored. |
| 4 | Plan and manage the budget | Estimating and controlling costs are a challenge in every profession, and this is the most critical area for many lawyers. |
| 5 | Assess risks to the budget and schedule | What can you do at the beginning of a matter to mitigate risks and increase the chances that work will be completed on time, within budget? |
| 6 | Manage quality | Most lawyers are very good at delivering high quality legal work. However, this becomes more challenging when schedules change and budgets get reduced. |
| 7 | Manage client communication and expectations | This is extremely important to clients and it is an area where many lawyers have room to improve. This section describes best practices, including using a "RACI matrix" to clarify who is Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed for each task. |
| 8 | Negotiate changes of scope | No matter how well lawyers manage legal matters, things often change. The issue here is deciding when and how to negotiate these changes with clients. |

Over several years of intensively coaching hundreds of lawyers, we have found that the "most important" issue varies from practice to practice and even from client to client. If you are not certain where to start, you may want to follow the advice of the AmLaw 200 leaders we surveyed for our research on *Client Value and Law Firm Profitability*.[1] When we asked which issues were most critical in the short-term for their firms, the top two were "Set objectives and define scope" and "Manage client communication," so one of these may be a good place for you to start.[2]

The important thing is to start today. Select an issue, turn to that chapter, define your action item, implement it, and evaluate the results.

## *Problems addressed by the eight key issues*

*By Ed Burke and Jim Hassett, LegalBizDev*

Correcting any one of these could increase your bottom line.

1. Unclear, expanding, or shifting objectives and scope:

   *Set objectives and define scope.* The seeds of budget and scheduling failures are often planted at the start. At the outset, you must know and record exactly what is included in each assignment and what is not.

2. Lack of organization:

   *Identify and schedule activities.* Break the matter down into smaller tasks that can be better budgeted, scheduled, staffed, and managed so that a problem in one task can be identified and solved before it throws the others—and the entire project—irretrievably off course.

3. Ineffective management of valuable personnel:

   *Assign tasks and manage the team.* Assigning the right tasks to the right people is not enough. You must create a sense of teamwork, guide the process, monitor performance, and motivate staff in the face of competing priorities.

4. Budget guesstimating:

   *Plan and manage the budget.* Estimating and controlling costs is very difficult but absolutely essential. Careful tracking, constant communication, and early adjustments—on the task level—can prevent write-downs.

[1] Jim Hassett, *Client Value and Law Firm Profitability* (LegalBizDev, 2013), 97

[2] It is interesting to note that many lawyers seem to think that LPM focuses on budgets and schedules and requires buying software and/or hiring internal project managers. While both software and staff can be quite useful, in the short-term the most critical issues may not be helped by automation or delegation. They simply come down to relationship partners getting a better understanding of what clients want and giving it to them.

5. Failure to prevent problems before they occur:

   *Assess risks to the budget and schedule.* Alternative plans for the most likely and damaging threats should be in place at the outset. Developing a Plan B only after a problem occurs causes delays, raises costs, diverts focus, and creates an air of crisis.

6. Compromising quality:

   *Manage quality.* Everyone must be clear it's about cost-effectiveness, not shortcuts.

7. Excellent legal work that nevertheless fails to meet client expectations:

   *Manage client communication.* This is extremely important to clients even if they neglect their end of it. Vague and shifting client objectives and priorities require you to build regular, two-way communication into the project plan. Otherwise it will be neglected when the focus becomes the matter itself.

8. Scope creep:

   *Negotiate change orders.* Changes are inevitable. The key to success is learning when and how to negotiate their costs with the client.

## Common questions related to the eight issues

*By Jim Hassett and Tim Batdorf, LegalBizDev*

If you are not quite sure where to begin, review this list of common questions, identify one or two that are relevant to your practice, and then turn to that chapter for possible solutions.

*Chapter 1: Set objectives and define scope*

- ❑ Do you ever have challenges with clients and/or lawyers on your team understanding exactly what is and is not included in a particular engagement?
- ❑ Do your engagement letters adequately specify the assumptions of your cost estimates?
- ❑ Could you improve your engagement letters for AFAs?
- ❑ Do you sometimes deal with clients who don't know what they want?
- ❑ Do your clients ever question what was done or what they will pay for?
- ❑ Do all of the client's key decision makers agree on the goals of representation?

*Chapter 2: Identify and schedule activities*

- ❑ For the matter you've selected, could you easily provide a list of all the major tasks that need to be completed?
- ❑ Do you think that some of the matters you work on could be accomplished more efficiently if you simplified the process?
- ❑ Should you think about using task codes in your firm?
- ❑ Are you considering new LPM software?

- ❑ Are you using checklists effectively?
- ❑ Do you ever run into last-minute time crunches or missed deadlines?

*Chapter 3: Assign tasks and manage the team*

- ❑ Could you reduce costs by delegating certain tasks to the right people?
- ❑ Do you think you might be able to improve the way you manage the lawyers who work with you on your team, either partners or associates?
- ❑ Could your team meetings be more efficient or effective?
- ❑ Do delegated tasks come in late or get completed differently than you expected?
- ❑ Are you delegating the right work to the right people in the best possible way?
- ❑ Do you think you could improve your personal time management?
- ❑ Would you be interested in talking about Outlook features that could help you organize and track your deadlines?

*Chapter 4: Plan and manage the budget*

- ❑ Do legal fees ever exceed your quoted budget estimate?
- ❑ Do your clients ever push back on fees or require write-offs?
- ❑ Do you think you could do a better job of setting prices at the start of a matter?
- ❑ As a matter proceeds, are you constantly aware of what percent of the work you've accomplished and what percent of the budget you've spent?

*Chapter 5: Assess risks to budget and schedule*

- ❑ Could you do a better job of minimizing risks to the budget at the beginning of the matter?
- ❑ Could you do a better job of minimizing risks to the schedule at the beginning of the matter?

*Chapter 6: Manage quality*

- ❑ Does perfectionism sometimes overshadow the client's needs or ideas about quality?
- ❑ Do you have proper systems in place to manage quality effectively as work processes become more efficient?
- ❑ Are you certain that your definition of quality matches the client's definition?

*Chapter 7: Manage client communication and expectations*

- ❑ Do you feel that you could improve internal or external communication?
- ❑ Do you keep the client regularly informed and know what information the client truly wants from you?
- ❑ Do you ever receive feedback from the client about improving your communication style?

- ❑ Does everyone on your team have a clear understanding of who is responsible/accountable/consulted/informed for each subtask?
- ❑ Do you have a clear plan for who is responsible on your team for communicating with the client?
- ❑ Do you have a crystal clear understanding of what your client means when they ask for "greater value"?
- ❑ Might simple written monthly reports improve clients' perception of communication quality?
- ❑ Should you consider holding more or better internal and external "lessons learned" reviews at the end of each matter?
- ❑ Would it be useful to discuss some general techniques for dealing with difficult clients and situations?

*Chapter 8: Negotiate changes of scope*

- ❑ Do you deal effectively with the inevitable changes in scope in a way that satisfies the clients while maintaining realization?
- ❑ Do you spot red flags immediately and make adjustments to stay on course?
- ❑ Should you consider putting new systems in place to track work that is beyond scope?
- ❑ Should you establish a formal process for when and how to deal with changes in scope?

# BENEFITS OF LPM

## *Key benefits*

The fundamental benefits of LPM are implicit in the definition above; if you think increasing client satisfaction and firm profitability are good ideas, then you are endorsing LPM.

More specifically, LPM will:

- ❑ Protect business with current clients
- ❑ Increase new business with current clients
- ❑ Increase new business with new clients
- ❑ Increase the predictability of fees and costs
- ❑ Minimize or eliminate surprises
- ❑ Improve communication with clients
- ❑ Manage risk

- ❑ Increase profitability
- ❑ Improve realization
- ❑ Deliver greater value to clients

### *Why is implementing LPM urgent?*

The primary reason that it is urgent to implement LPM is simple: clients want it.

For the last several years, in its annual *Chief Legal Officers Survey*, Altman Weil has listed 10 top trends and asked, "Of the following service improvements and innovations, please select the three you would most like to see from your outside counsel."[3] The list includes preventative law strategies, non-hourly based pricing structures, improved communication, alternative project staffing, and technology efficiencies. The top three in the most recent survey were:

1. Greater cost reduction (selected by 50% of respondents)
2. Improved budget forecasting (46%)
3. More efficient project management (40%)

It is worth noting that this question has been asked for the last several years and these have consistently finished as the top three. Since LPM leads to #1 and #2 and is the very definition of #3, you could sum up the results by saying that what clients want most these days is LPM, LPM, and more LPM.

How well are law firms doing in meeting this client need? Not very well. When CLOs were asked, "In your opinion, in the current legal market, how serious are law firms about changing their legal service delivery model to provide greater value to clients (as opposed to simply cutting costs)?" on a scale from 0 to 10, the median rating (with half the firms above and half below) was 3. These results have been almost identical for the last several years, so despite all the press releases law firms are putting out trumpeting their successes in increasing value, clients have not been impressed by the results.

Turning to the law firm perspective, the first question in Altman Weil's 2016 *Law Firms in Transition Survey* was, "Which of the following legal market trends do you think are temporary and which will be permanent?" The top three answers were more price competition (95% think this is permanent), focus on improved practice efficiency (93%), and more commoditized legal work (88%).[4] Of course, all three can be addressed through LPM.

But when Altman Weil asked the same group, "Has your firm significantly changed its strategic approach to efficiency of legal service delivery?" only 44% said yes (26% said no and 30% said changes were "under consideration"). Summing this up, 93% of firm leaders think more efficiency is needed, but only 44% are doing something about it. What's wrong with this picture?

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[3] Altman Weil, *Chief Legal Officer Survey*, http://www.altmanweil.com/CLO2015/, 26
[4] Altman Weil, *Law Firms in Transition Survey*, http://www.altmanweil.com/LFiT2016/, 1

In many cases firms that say they have "changed their strategic approach" have done so only for a small sub-group within the firm or in a strategic plan which has not yet been implemented. In the trenches, the vast majority of lawyers are still practicing the way they always have. Perhaps this should not be surprising, since LPM requires lawyers to change habits they've developed over decades, and no one likes to change.[5]

The gap between what firms should be doing and what they are actually doing has existed for years. Fortunately, the survey dug into the details of what's behind the problem. Authors Eric Seeger and Tom Clay concluded, "The biggest impediment to change, identified by 64% of law firm leaders, is that partners resist most change efforts."[6] As a long-term strategy in a profession where client demands are changing rapidly, that's a great way to insure that your job will be in danger.

In 1962, Professor Everett Rogers analyzed the forces involved in changing business behavior and summarized his conclusions in an influential text entitled *Diffusion of Innovations*, which is now in its fifth edition. In this context, the most important idea is his argument that the people who adopt a new idea are distributed in a normal curve in several sequential categories, which he called innovators (2.5%), early adopters (13.5%), early majority (34%), late majority (34%), and laggards (16%).

While it is impossible to prove exactly where LPM stands on this continuum, based on our experience talking to a wide number of firms, we strongly believe that LPM is at the early adopters' stage. A small group of innovators has successfully proven its value, but the spread to others remains slow. Many law firms have done an excellent job at putting out press releases announcing that they are leaders in LPM, but when it comes to changing the way an entire practice group or firm does business, they have fallen far short.

If you believed what you read on the internet, you'd think that LPM had already swept the legal profession and that a large number of firms have developed a solid track record of success. However, it is an open secret among people in the field that there is a huge gap between the success that many firms claim on their web pages and the slow pace of LPM adoption within even the most vocal firms.

Even the firms that have been most serious about making this change have found that progress is slow. Seyfarth Shaw is one of the best known names in LPM and has been working aggressively on implementing it for more than a decade. But the firm's Chair and Managing Partner Steven Poor has written in the *New York Times Dealbook* blog that one should "Never underestimate lawyers' resistance to change."[7] That's the bad news. The good news was summarized by Lisa Damon, the partner who leads SeyfarthLean, who has said

[5] I spend my life talking to law firm leaders about what they are doing to increase efficiency, and my guess is that the percent of firms that have made significant changes is closer to four percent than to 44.
[6] *LFiT*, vi
[7] Steve Poor, "Re-Engineering the Business of Law," *New York Times Dealbook* (2012), http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2012/05/07/re-engineering-the-business-of-law/

that, "If you get a group of lawyers and staff into a room to discuss how to make things more efficient, it's very easy to find savings."[8]

When you put these two facts together—it's easy to figure out how to be efficient, but hard to get lawyers to act on it—you begin to see why there is so much confusion about what works best for LPM and about which firms have made the most progress. Add in the vested interest that firms have in publicizing any success they do achieve, the fact that there are wide individual differences between lawyers within a single firm, and secrecy within firms, and it becomes clear that it is almost impossible for outsiders to compare firms on their progress.

The bad news here is that clients want faster progress. The good news is that to win new business you just have to be a little better than your competitors, so law firms that have started down the LPM path have an enormous opportunity to get ahead of those who have not.

Glacial progress can produce new business when you are competing with firms that are making no progress at all. We were reminded of this when one client contacted us two years after we offered just-in-time LPM coaching at her firm. She reported that they had just won some new business as a result of using LPM. She went on to say that she had been frustrated by the slow pace of change in her firm, but in this case it did not matter because their competitors were even slower. "If you move like a turtle but you're racing a bunch of snails," she said, "it all works out in the end."

The slow rate of progress is in some ways hard to understand given the potential payoffs. As Altman Weil put it in one survey:

> Perhaps no other long-term initiative will do more to support staffing innovation, pricing innovation, efficient delivery of services, improvements in margin, and reductions in overhead than true project management training. It's important to distinguish between a one- or two-day seminar which will not produce much long-term value, and a systematic, hands-on approach that instills fundamental operational change. Firms that give their people the right kind of tools and training in this area will create new efficiencies for clients, improve profitability of matters, and create significant competitive advantage. [9]

When I interviewed managing partners, chairs, and other leaders of 50 AmLaw 200 firms for my book *Client Value and Law Firm Profitability*, several talked about the importance of implementing LPM:

> One of the problems that we have, and frankly that most firms have, is just teaching lawyers how to manage a project, getting them out of the habit of just automatically starting out with some rote process. Just because the client says "I think I might have a lawsuit" doesn't mean you go off and conduct 40 depositions. Lawyers need to sit

[8] http://adverselling.typepad.com/how_law_firms_sell/2009/01/alternative-fees-part-3-what-your-competitors-are-doing.html
[9] http://www.altmanweil.com/dir_docs/resource/f68236ab-d51f-4d81-8172-96e8d47387e3_document.pdf, viii

> down and talk about what the client is trying to accomplish. It might turn out that we are able to accomplish the client's end goal without taking any depositions.
>
> Most of our clients are no better at understanding or applying legal project management than we are. But in the future, the fact that you can actually do something on time and within budget is going to become an important indicator of whether or not you really are a good lawyer.
>
> If you apply all its principles, LPM is not that scary, and it's not that hard. Just getting people to understand it and do it is the biggest challenge.[10]

According to an ALM Intelligence survey, firms that have begun to apply LPM, even in very limited ways, have already received benefits. When the survey asked "Which of the following 13 benefits has your firm realized from its project management effort?" every single benefit in their list had been realized by at least 20% of the group. The most common benefit was "More productive relationships with clients" (achieved by 62%).

The ALM survey concluded that:

> LPM can help bring increased effectiveness, reduce wasted time, and manage client expectations… Law firms can overcome [the] hurdles by targeting initial efforts in areas that would be most receptive, incrementally rolling out initiatives, and getting experienced help. Those that can successfully implement LPM will find over time that they gain a competitive advantage.[11]

In our research on *Client Value and Law Firm Profitability*, 85% of law firm leaders said that firms that move more quickly in providing value will gain a competitive advantage. Several respondents described this as a matter of life and death:

> I think the firms that are most effective are going to do well, and I don't think everybody will survive. In the last several years, there have been several firms that went away. And I believe that's going to continue.
>
> The way law firms deliver legal services to clients is undergoing a huge revolution. It's going to change before our eyes in the course of a very short period of time. And it's all being driven by clients who want to get value for their money.
>
> I think the market's going to shake itself out. I think firms that can't deliver more value will fail.[12]

As the chair of another firm summed it up:

> I believe that we're still in the beginning of the process. There are a number of famous economists who have talked about disruptive technologies and disruptive

[10] Hassett, *Client Value*, 94
[11] http://www.almlegalintel.com/SurveyDescription.aspx?id=VSLYO4Oih00=&type=fEFgIaD+grg=, 17
[12] Hassett, *Client Value*, 199

> business processes. I think there's a lot of evidence out there that this profession is being subjected to those pressures. Five years from now, if I turn out to be wrong, that will be great. But if I'm right, then I have to believe that those firms that adapt more quickly will have a competitive advantage, because the firms that don't adapt quickly enough will be out of business.[13]

## About LegalBizDev

LegalBizDev works with law firms to increase client satisfaction, competitiveness, and profitability. We literally wrote the books that helped start the legal project management movement and have also been widely recognized as leaders in legal business development. While many competitors offer educational programs in these important areas, only LegalBizDev has developed proprietary processes to help lawyers change their behavior. For example, our one-to-one coaching program helps individual lawyers to deliver their legal services more efficiently, thereby immediately providing clients with greater value. Our LPM Acceleration™ consulting program helps practice groups and entire firms produce needed change more quickly and cost effectively. For more information, contact us today (800-49-TRAIN, info@legalbizdev.com) to discuss the best way to meet your unique needs.

225 Franklin Street, 26th floor
Boston, MA 02110
800-49-TRAIN
www.legalbizdev.com
info@legalbizdev.com

[13] Hassett, *Client Value*, 199