

Legal Project Management

An essential tool to manage costs and risks

Why Legal Project Management?

Isn't it just a fad?

In the face of unprecedented financial and budgetary challenges, GCs are under pressure to deliver greater control, predictability, accountability, and responsiveness from their external legal service providers.

One of the most effective ways to relieve these pressures is to target a reduction in external legal spend (which typically accounts for 55-60% of corporate legal budgets).

A desire to mitigate these costs this has fuelled a number of recent trends, for example a rise in the use of EFAs; a desire for law firms to operate more efficiently; and an increased appetite for more a more structured and disciplined approach to the management of matters – i.e. formal project management.

As an in-house lawyer, you may therefore find yourself increasingly required to “wear two hats” as both a legal expert and a legal project manager. As a GC, you may need to recruit and manage a legal project manager (or a team of legal project managers).

“An integral tool of corporate business units for years, project management has become important to legal departments because of expanding client expectations and the evolving role of in-house counsel. Clients now expect more than substantive legal knowledge; they require in-house counsel to have business acumen and to provide legal services in an efficient, predictable, and consistent manner.”



What is Legal Project Management?

At its core, Legal Project Management (LPM) offers this structured and disciplined approach to matter management. It can be applied to a variety of matter types, from M&A to litigation, to strategic contracts or a portfolio of high volume, low-complexity matters (e.g. volume transaction work or litigation).

It borrows heavily from more established project management principles used for decades in construction and technology projects, where “on time” and “on budget” are at the forefront of conversations.

While LPM is most often used when engaging external counsel, it also benefits projects that are 100% insourced.

How can in-house teams benefit?

LPM involves planning and managing all aspects of a matter from start to finish, considering deliverables, resource, budget, risks and timescales. As such, it offers a range of benefits for in-house legal teams; from generating operational and organisational efficiencies, to creating work-flows and risk management channels between in-house and external lawyers. This facilitates a mutually beneficial delivery model where in-house teams see a reduction in spend, whilst law firms benefit from the improved margin these efficiencies generate.

LPM should be a key part of your future planning. Efficient management of your team and your transactions will strongly influence your ability to control cost and manage risk effectively. It is a key factor in making your in-house team more effective, sustainable and valuable to the business in the long-term.



Work delivered “on time, and on budget”



Greater efficiencies (for example, the reduced need for “reinventing the wheel” on client matters).



Greater predictability of cost, both by phase and task, for the total matter.



A dedicated legal project manager can act as an effective buffer to tackle difficult conversations around cost control and financials.



Enhanced communication and better management of expectations (the concept of “no surprises”).



Better quality and greater consistency of work product.



Better predictability of (and improvement to) the eventual outcome (especially true for litigation-related matters).

Your LPM checklist

The Five Steps for Legal Project Management

1

Defining project objectives and scope

- Information gathering to understand the scope and expectations.
- Discussing with your external counsel/internal team to agree upon phases, deliverables, and desired outcomes.
- Discussing project scope, resource and budget.
- Discussing risks that may impact the matter.
- Agreeing invoicing and reporting processes.

2

Project planning

- Defining project phases, tasks, and performance standards.
- Developing timelines and milestones.
- Selecting the matter team (firm side and client side).
- Budgeting.
- Identifying and priming appropriate tools.
- Planning approaches for handling unexpected events and risks.

3

Executing the plan: doing the legal work

- Ensuring work is resourced appropriately (at the right level).
- Assigning tasks and delegating authority effectively.
- Ensuring collaborative communication.
- Giving timely, objective, and specific feedback.
- Managing team performance, dynamics, and morale.

4

Monitoring and measuring progress

- Tracking progress of phases and tasks.
- Avoiding scope creep, bottlenecks, redundancies, or other inefficiencies.
- Tracking budget-to-actual.
- Making project adjustments when unexpected events occur (dynamic planning).

5

Post-project review

- Evaluating outcomes in relation to agreed project scope.
- Identifying what went well and what needs improved upon next time.
- Discussions with relevant stakeholders to give and get real-time feedback.
- Identifying lessons learned, resources needed, and surprises that can be avoided.
- Function to aggregate cumulative learning and record this.
- Store information centrally so it is accessible to all in the future.

Next steps

How can we help you

Strategic & advisory

LPM advisory

Receive strategic advice on the efficient running of projects and matters driven by the legal function or on the establishment and development of your in-house LPM capabilities. This may include helping you develop your LPM frameworks, processes and templates as well as the provision of training for your team and the sharing of best practice.

Project/Process design & delivery

Matter-specific LPM

Working with you and your team we can provide, depending on your needs, either a dedicated Legal Project Manager or multi-disciplinary 'on-the-ground' resources, for the management of legal projects and matters to ensure they are completed efficiently, on time, on budget, and to the right quality.

Portfolio management

Assisting your legal team in planning, structuring and reporting on complex legal matters and large portfolios, we can help you balance the implementation of change initiatives and the maintenance of business-as-usual, while optimising your return on investment.

LPM toolkit

Leveraging best practice to develop a toolkit and templates, empowering your team to manage their own legal projects more efficiently and effectively.

Technology selection and implementation

LPM tool selection and implementation

Helping you to select, pilot and implement the right tools to support the management of your legal projects and/or matters.

"First, have a definite, clear practical ideal; a goal, an objective. Second, have the necessary means to achieve your ends; wisdom, money, materials, and methods. Third, adjust all your means to that end."

Aristotle



Reduced costs and improved outcome of matters



Improved stakeholder management and reporting



Accurate scoping and efficient management of legal projects

The team



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Stéphanie Hamon is the Head of Legal Operations Consulting at Norton Rose Fulbright. Stéphanie was previously at Barclays where she headed up the External Engagement team for over three years. Under her leadership the department won “Legal operations team of the year” at the 2019 UK Legal 500 Awards.



Blandine Davies

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Blandine Davies is an experienced Legal Project Manager and heads up Norton Rose Fulbright’s Practice Services Team. She is a qualified solicitor with over 12 years’ experience in the legal industry representing FTSE 100 clients on a range of international restructuring, insolvency, contentious and non-contentious transactions across a wide range of industries.

Blandine and the team of professional Legal Project Managers at Norton Rose Fulbright are client facing and will work closely with partners, fee earners and other business support functions to ensure that we deliver an excellent service to clients.



Mark Karnowski

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Mark Karnowski is a Senior Legal Project Manager with over 11 years experience delivering complex, high-value projects for national and global law firms, finance houses, and banks.

Mark specialises in bringing together the right people, processes, and tailored technology solutions to make a material difference to matter delivery and to the bottom line. With a background in finance and previous roles within some of the world’s largest banks, Mark brings real focus around cost control and to creating efficiencies across the matter lifecycle.



Tom Platt

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Tom Platt is a Senior Legal Project Manager, primarily supporting Norton Rose Fulbright’s Dispute Resolution practice group. Tom specialises in large and complex multi-jurisdictional disputes and investigations, as well as leading the LPM aspects of client relationships for large financial services clients. Before joining the legal industry, Tom delivered multi-million dollar engineering projects for the world’s largest oil companies, deploying and managing teams across the world. Tom is a certified project manager with over a decade of Project Management experience.



NRF Transform is our global change and innovation programme. It aims to make how we deliver traditional services more effective and efficient, and to provide entirely new solutions to our client's most pressing business problems. It has over 150 staff in offices around the world, as well as 3 dedicated Hubs, and includes teams focusing on Applied Technology, Innovation, Legal Design, Legal Project Management, Legal Operations Consulting, Resource Management, and Commercial Management.

The Legal Operations Consulting Practice helps General Counsels and in-house legal teams optimise the delivery of legal services to their organisations, enabling them to go beyond managing legal risk and become a strategic business partner, supporting the wider objectives of the business.



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