

GIVING THE CLIENTS  
WHAT THEY WANT:  
RESPONSIVENESS,  
CONSISTENCY,  
EFFICIENCY

What do legal clients want? They want world-class legal minds working for them, that's a given. But in these times of flat growth and cost-consciousness, clients demand more. They are demanding responsiveness, consistency, efficiency. In other words, along with outstanding legal products, they want outstanding legal *services*.

### RESPONSIVENESS, CONSISTENCY, EFFICIENCY

Increasing pressure from this informed client base is causing firms to analyze the way they work and how they manage their matters. Such firms are asking themselves: "Are we communicating well enough with our clients, are we being responsive to their business needs?" "Are we delivering world-class service on a consistent basis across the firm?" "Are we as efficient as we can be?"

Your corporate clients' general counsels are themselves being challenged. They need to demonstrate effective management of their outside counsel and return on their investment. To that end, they are becoming more strategic and data-driven, with many using formalized metric programs to track costs. Access to this type of information has empowered general counsels to push back on the outside firms they employ. A recent survey of corporate counsel identified three desired areas of improvement: Cost reduction, improved budget forecasting, and efficient project management. To win and retain work, you must show where you are innovative and how you are responding to meet clients' business requirements.

Clients also want consistency. A recent survey by the BTI Consulting Group found that the top reason clients fire law firms is *inconsistency* in keeping clients informed, in dealing with unexpected changes, in handling problems, and in meeting scope of work. This failure to deliver work in a dependable, reliable manner adds up to less-than-stellar client services.

Efficiency is the third requirement that a firm must address. A firm must deliver high-quality work efficiently. Doing so ultimately results in good service at lesser expense to the client. One way a legal firm can drive costs down and increase efficiency is by using less expensive resources to deliver the services. Not surprisingly, being efficient comes down to a firm implementing systems and processes that ensure the work is delivered *in a consistent manner*, whether the work is done by Lawyer A or Lawyer B.

### STRATEGIES FOR DELIVERING

To meet these requirements, legal management professionals are turning to process improvement and matter management, including putting "legal" Lean Six Sigma practices in place, to incorporating over-arching matter management technologies.

The Lean Six Sigma methodology, although fairly new to the legal environment, has been widely accepted and implemented in other fields. Legal firms are turning to Lean Six Sigma, a set of techniques and tools for process improvement, as they examine their own processes and practices to smooth them out and make them more uniform. The goal is to put in place continuous efforts to achieve stable and predictable process results by reducing variation in processes. With such efforts in place, firms can assure their clients that, in addition to offering up world-class lawyers to do the work, the firm handles the work using processes that are proven, repeatable, consistent, and efficient.

Along with this focus on refining processes and practices comes the need to re-engineer how legal work products are delivered by professional staff, in order to protect profits and reduce legal and business risk. Such efforts help firms manage resources and allocate work appropriately.

The interest in matter-management tools is driven by previous, piecemeal efforts to increase efficiencies. In the past, many firms tried to streamline processes by employing "point solutions." This approach led to a hodgepodge of technology fixes—a financial management system here, a conflicts management system there, plus other systems for document management, customer relationship management, and so on. Each system required its own technology expert and systems weren't always able to "talk" to each other. Thus, technology management became increasingly complex and inefficient.

To solve this problem, firms are turning to unified matter-management systems. Such tools bring all of a firm's business capabilities and processes together, providing a complete picture of all the items and actions for a given matter. Thus, a lawyer can immediately see, for example, that three tasks were created the previous week and how many hours were billed, when the next court date is, and when the bank is sending the financial statements. In a unified matter-management system, all the information is presented in context.

For firms that want to gain new clients and retain existing clientele, it is no longer enough to offer the best legal minds for the job at hand. By putting process management and matter management tools and techniques to use, firms can also provide what clients are looking for: first-class legal work and quality legal services delivered with responsiveness, efficiency, and consistency.

To learn more about matter management solutions from Thomson Reuters Elite, visit [elite.com/mattersphere](http://elite.com/mattersphere).

