

moderator



Jason Pyrz
Head of Legal Project Management, US
Mayer Brown

panelists



David Cai
Legal Project Manager
Lenczner Slaght



Liz Perez
Manager
Legal Project Management
White & Case



Avery Archambo
Senior Legal Project Manager
Reed Smith



Wumi Olukoya
Manager
Legal Project Management
White & Case

“LPM: THE NEXT GENERATION CONVERSATION”

“What I get the most satisfaction from is when I have a partner say, oh, how come I haven't had you before? Or where have you been all my life? Which is an actual quote from a partner, and it wasn't romantic at all, but that was the satisfying moment.”

HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN YOUR JOB TO SOMEONE WHO HAS NEVER HEARD OF LEGAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT?

LPM's role is to take all the clients' needs and requirements and to structure them into actionable plans. LPMs pay attention to what is currently handled inefficiently and find better solutions to manage matters. They help both lawyers and clients see where they are in the process with better analytics and transparency. LPMs are also great communicators, bridging gaps in communication with people internationally and externally.

LPMs can be considered rather entrepreneurial in selling ideas, new systems and processes. They are problem-solvers, always thinking of ways to help law firms work more innovatively and more efficiently.

“The role of the project manager is to be that conduit that manages that process for the clients, to make sure that the end result is exactly what they want.”

“LPM helps lawyers get better transparency and not only for the law firm, but also for our clients to have better transparency into why was a matter charged this way? Why did you go over budget? Was your scoping and your staffing wrong? How do you become more profitable?”

“The most simplest way for me to describe it is I solve problems every single day.”

“I think generally you hear this verbiage that lawyers are sometimes a bit risk averse. So how do you convince these people that this new system, this new process, which they haven't really seen, and they have definitely not seen the tangible results of it, how do you convince them that this will work? So I feel like a lot of that work is building those relationships, developing these soft skills to really push that agenda forward.”

WHAT IS YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH TO LAWYERS/PARTNERS?

Show them how you can make their lives easier.

“Let the lawyers at the firm focus on the law and let the legal project manager help you on the other aspects that matter, from pricing to budgets to data management to analysis to file management.”

It's a win win for the firm and for the client because it frees up the lawyers time and the partner time to work on other files, as well as develop further that client relationship while showcasing to your client the cost effectiveness and becoming industry leader in this area.”

THE INTANGIBLES: IMPORTANT SOFT SKILLS

- ✓ RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
- ✓ GOOD PROBLEM SOLVER
- ✓ SELF-STARTER & ENTREPRENEURIAL
- ✓ CONFIDENCE & PATIENCE
- ✓ LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT
- ✓ CLEAR & CONCISE COMMUNICATION

WHAT'S THE MOST INTERESTING REQUEST YOU HAVE EVERY WORKED ON AS AN LPM?

LPMs are creative thinkers, as in they are always thinking of innovative novel solutions, finding creative solutions and ways to do things differently. Some find what they do just on a day to day is interesting.

“The actual work that they're (clients) doing, they are making real changes in the world.”

“...Collaborating with so many different departments in the firm and utilizing their resources to kind of help me build this tool.”

“Coming up with interesting ways to use AI, ways that people have never used.”

“Thinking, what's next? How can my clients start to utilize what we've done as opposed to just handing over the product? It's almost putting yourself in their shoes and thinking, five years from now, how would they be using it? And it's just very interesting.”

THE PURSUIT OF LPM

Most LPMs did not make the conscious decision to pursue legal project management as a career. Instead, it more or less evolved organically. For many, they were not even aware of the role, as just several years ago, the role did not even exist. However, fast forward to today, LPM has grown rapidly, and it still is rapidly gaining popularity.

In some ways, a career in LPM is not fully defined yet. There is still no clear definition of what your duties are if you, for example, look on job postings.

“So for me, it was going into eDiscovery and becoming familiar with project management, and then from there moving on a little bit to project and product management of legal technology. And these small incremental steps is what got me into the career I'm in today.”

“This career, I think, takes a bit of ambition in the sense of knowing what you want and knowing that you want to solve these problems in a law firm and then advocating for these solutions and trying to create these positions and roles for you.”

WHAT IS MOST FULFILLING BEING AN LPM?

What some LPMs find the most fulfilling about their role is being able to see the results immediately. For example, by coming up with solutions through thorough analysis, LPMs help to reduce lawyers write off and increase profitability. Direct impact made at the firm can be seen on a daily basis. Whether they are big or small wins, it can feel good to know that you are making a noticeable difference.

What LPMs are doing is effectively changing the legal industry and they way things are being done, redefining the culture and business model. Moreover, there is self and career development for the LPM themselves by developing entrepreneur and important relationship-based soft skills.

Another fulfilling aspect is being able to work with other bright talented LPMs from various backgrounds. LPMs tend to be very open and honest in this relatively new field, in effect pulling together new ideas help one another.

“I get quick wins, and then I'm able to show that in a real way, be it where our margin is improving or we're on budget or we're not over budget or we're not writing off. There's so many different ways for us to show our value.”

“Fundamentally what we do here, does affect the law firm and does impact the law industry as a whole in changing the way things are done, redefining what work and culture really means and that business model within the legal industry.”