

Extreme Magical Thinking: Technology Won't Take You Off the Hook

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On the eve of LegalTech, I have been encountering a lot of magical thinking recently when talking with law firm partners about Legal Project Management. One partner, hoping that the IT and KM folks can simply buy a tech solution so that he could avoid making any real changes to the way he manages matters, engaged in extreme magical thinking when he asked, “isn’t there just some software where I can click one button and it manages everything?” He just wants to keep doing what he’s always done and have technology somehow make the result different.

Sorry, we live in the real world.

Here’s the bottom line: *Siri* can’t analyze what tasks need to be done (or not done) for a client, and iPads don’t independently tailor project plans. Software sits

inert until some lawyer lights it up, infuses legal judgment and knowledge into matters and uses the software to reflect back the enhanced management skills being applied.

If your firm has invested (or is about to invest) in magnificent new software – that elegant integrated dashboard will sit on your computer screen and tie together project scope, phases, tasks, team members, timeframes and the all-important budget-to-actual comparison – but it can’t overcome inefficient or non-existent management of legal matters. Only the lawyers can do that. And, that requires **extreme** practical acceptance that clients today want excellent lawyers who also are accomplished managers that drive efficient work product.

Software tools *support* efficient lawyering, but it is extreme magical thinking to suppose that some push-button silver bullet can convert inefficient work into efficient work.

One of the most widely read blog post I’ve ever written deals with this very subject: Legal Project Management Tools: Let Rube Goldberg Rest in Peace.
[<http://www.pamwoldow.com/?p=763>]

But, it is worth a reminder that LPM and its technological support tools are about *how* legal projects are planned and managed. *What* is practiced and delivered will always remain up to the lawyer. The core functions of being a lawyer and exercising professional acumen can’t be delegated to technology, and that won’t be changed by even the most sophisticated tools, templates and software. As always, those decisions will be up to you.