

## Law Firms Use Project Management to Win New Business

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### Faegre Uses Project Management Techniques to Win RFP

Project management is the closest thing there is to a panacea for a profession suffering from aggravated clients, shrinking revenues, competitive inertia, archaic business practices and system waste, according to blogger Jordan Furlong. "If it could cure cancer and direct an Oscar-winning movie, it could hardly be a more attractive proposition," he gushes.

General counsel are increasingly under pressure to control their legal budgets, and are demanding that law firms abandon the billable hour and become more efficient. When law firms offer "project management" as part of their proposals, it is music to thier ears.

Project management is a standardized approach for planning, controlling, and executing a project within the constraints of time, budget, and mandatory performance requirements. Further, when the project ends, there is a final close-out process that looks for opportunities to apply lessons learned to similar future projects. The goal is that over time, costs will decline, quality will increase, client relationships are strengthened, and law firm profits are improved. When the firm embraces this brave new world, it can supercharge its competitive advantage through Lean Sigma principles applied throughout the organization. With a theory this elegant, who can resist the pitch?

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The firm was competing in an RFP process against a low-cost law firm from a smaller market. Faegre & Benson LLP is one of the 100 largest law firms in the United States with 475 attorneys with six offices serving clients in 22 industries in the U.S. nearly other 100 countries.



Steven Petrie

"We took a lean approach, to extract waste from any point of the process," said Steven Petrie, Director of Practice Operations and Strategy for Faegre. "This gave us a solid foundation in efficient execution and was an important differentiator. We went through the process map which spread across an entire table and the client was impressed."

Petrie spoke recently at the Marketing Partner Forum in Phoenix in a program,

"Profitability, Analysis & Pricing." The client had a strong desire for fee predictability. Accordingly, Faegre concentrated on the elimination of waste, overproduction, over-processing, defects, inventory, waiting, motion and transportation.

Each task was identified and delegated to lower-cost attorneys with project-management responsibility. Forms and documents were standardized and lawyers on the project were each issued a "Project Reference Notebook." The firm used historic representative matters to arrive at a value-based fixed fee. Not being fools, they also did an in-depth profitability analysis.

The client was blown away by the firm's effort and hired them for the legal work. The lesson for law firms? If you can demonstrate that you are efficient, you can succeed in charging a higher fee.

### **Squire Sanders Launches Partnering for Worldwide Value**

Global law firm Squire, Sanders & Dempsey recently named Vincent J. Cordo, Jr. the firm's first Director of Project Management and Process Improvement.



Vincent Cordo

"Our clients tell us value – what we offer to ensure cost-effective legal solutions – has become just as important as cutting costs," said Howard J. C. Nicols, Squire Sanders' global managing partner. "Vince's experience in legal project management and process improvement directly benefit our clients."

Cordo and firm lawyers have launched several projects that use project management tactics to streamline processes, Nicols said. Additionally, Cordo routinely engages directly with clients as part of value-focused client teams.

As the global economic crisis continues to upend how law firms do business, Squire, Sanders & Dempsey L.L.P. has responded by adapting and enhancing long-held firm practices to create a timely value proposition – Squire Sanders Partnering for Worldwide Value. Cordo, who joined Squire Sanders from White & Case LLP, is also a key member of the firm's Value Partner Team, which oversees the Partnering for Worldwide Value initiative.

"We know our clients are feeling unprecedented pressure to obtain the best value for their legal service investment," said Squire Sanders Chair James J. Maiwurm. "We get the message and have responded with our worldwide platform, culture of collaboration and partnering with clients, and uniform technology backbone. And for the past six months we have been reviewing our best practices and making further investments in technology and training. We are now ready to launch a multifaceted program that has but a single focus – our clients and *their* business goals."

Partners Susan M. DiMichele and Patrick D. Cornelius co-chair the Partnering for

Worldwide Value initiative and lead the firm's Value Partner Team, which drives the firm's efforts to define and deliver maximum value to clients. The team includes firmwide practice and office leaders, senior nonlawyer professionals and partners from varied geographic backgrounds and wide-ranging experience. The initiative is detailed in a white paper at <http://bit.ly/gIUc11>.

"The Value Partner Team personifies our commitment to a new model for providing legal services. We are examining all aspects of our service delivery – across industry groups, practice groups and regions – for best practices and alignment with client needs and goals. The result is a value proposition that makes us even more effective business counsel for our clients," DiMickelle said. "The team builds on the firm's long-held philosophy of acting, operating and thinking as a 'one-firm firm,' rather than a cohort of practice- or office-based profit centers," she added.

"We have adopted a number of tools and processes to support this effort," Cornelius continued. "For example, we use secure intranet areas to support worldwide collaboration efforts focused on client, practice and industry efforts. In our transactional practices tools such as client-specific schedules and templates enable us to ensure coordinated action by lawyers and teams, sometimes working on dozens of documents or projects for a client simultaneously across borders and practice specialties. We can maximize staffing across locations, access shared work product and develop precedent banks that increase efficiency and reduce costs for our clients."

The firm also offers "virtual in-house" staffing to clients that have large and experienced in-house legal teams. Squire Sanders lawyers discuss client staffing plans and then suggest firm resources who will be valuable additions to the in-house team.

"We assign Squire Sanders lawyers whose specialized experience ensures they can promptly offer clients effective advice easily implemented by the in-house lawyers," Cornelius said. "We try to staff our virtual in-house teams with lawyers who know the client's preferred approach to matters and the client's typical document forms. We found this to be a simple, straightforward solution creating a more integrated, collaborative relationship with our clients."

Alex Shumate, the firm's global managing partner for regions, said the initiative includes a formal endorsement of the Association of Corporate Counsel's Value Challenge. "The ACC's Value Challenge represents the collective voice of many of our clients," Shumate said. "Our endorsement of the Challenge demonstrates that we take seriously our commitment to meeting – and exceeding – our clients' expectations."

Maiwurm added, "We're embracing this challenge because we see the opportunity to be proactive in making clients comfortable with our business model and its consistency with their interests. We see this as an opportunity to be leaders in creating 'win-win' scenarios rather than something to shy away from. We welcome dialogue with clients on these matters of common interest."

For more on this topic, call:

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