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Making Mental Health Matter

A real conversation about creating an agenda of change in legal organizations.





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“We should all be proud of how we have stepped up in this last year, especially with how we led our legal organizations through an uncharted wilderness.”

An Upside-Down Year Like No Other

I love the musical *Hamilton*. One lyric in particular has been on my mind this last year: The world turned upside down.

It's hard to believe we are at the year mark for when things suddenly changed. From Tom Hanks announcing he had COVID-19. To the NBA cancelling their season. That giddy feeling when you were somehow able to snag some Clorox wipes. To that sinking feeling of wondering if you could hug a friend without getting sick. Overnight, the mundane parts of our daily routine like stopping in for coffee on our way into the office were gone. Even scarier, we did not know for how long it would last or what was ahead of us.

We should all be proud of how we have stepped up in this last year, especially with how we led our legal organizations through an uncharted wilderness. As vaccines become more readily available and normalcy is more within reach, it can be tempting to just move on, to keep going. But that is glossing over the very real losses we have experienced in the last year. We have lost more than 500,000 in the United States alone. We have endured isolation, homeschooling, missed milestones and caretaking while tethered to Zoom as we did our best to get our jobs done — all this with the backdrop of a pandemic we were still learning about. It's been a *lot*. And I do not think it's something we should just move on from without really taking a look at the effects.

I encourage you all to read this month's cover story, "Making Mental Health Matter," which is written by my friend and Immediate Past President James Cornell. He shares his own personal story while speaking with experts who help us better understand how to recognize signs of distress in our colleagues and ourselves. We often talk about the mental health challenges lawyers face but do not often acknowledge it's an issue that affects everyone.

Given all we've been through, I think it is important for us each to read this article and reflect and come up with a plan for how we are going to tackle this together. Plus, if you are looking for CLM credits, you can take the quiz at the end of the article. It's a first for *Legal Management* — an interactive scenario for the CE course that offers techniques for how to respond by walking you through how to help an employee who seems to be struggling lately.

It's important to look back, to adapt and to learn, but also to look forward. And I'd be remiss if I did not point us all to a sign that things are working their way back to what we know:

We are officially planning to meet this October for our Annual Conference & Expo! In a year of challenges, I look forward to getting to reconnect with all of you in Austin to celebrate ALA's 50th anniversary, October 3–6. Getting to plan for that event is a small sign that the world is beginning to go back right side up.

As always, it is my pleasure to serve with you and for you.



Debbie@threlkeld-legal.com

Happy 50th Birthday ALA

ALA turned 50 on March 4, but we are celebrating our birthday all year. Whether you were part of the organization in the 1970s or just joined yesterday, you can enjoy the many ways we will recognize five decades of upholding the value of the legal management profession and providing professional development, networking and resources. Check out our interactive timeline, photos, stories and other features and join the celebration.



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CHARLES CARLSON
President and Chief Executive
Officer
Benefit Intelligence

“From the ashes of a pandemic and economic crisis may rise a mental health movement that could draw the focus of businesses looking to improve productivity. They will realize a workforce with improved mental health can lead to increased productivity, a better company culture and progress at every level.”

Virtual Care Makes Mental Health More Accessible for Employees

It has been said, in nearly every way possible, that 2020 was a brutally tough year. While the year definitely presented many challenges, there were also many learning opportunities.

One area that emerged was the increased acceptance and use of telemedicine. Prior to COVID-19, many employers offered telemedicine to employees as part of their benefits plan. However, in the wake of the pandemic, nearly half of all employers have started expanding their health care benefits, especially in this area. In response, telemedicine has not only grown in volume, but it has also grown in scope — particularly in the area of mental health.

Over and above the convenience and safety that telemedicine helped provide worldwide during the last year, an unexpected increase for mental health support also arose. Mental health in the United States has always come with unique challenges and stigmas — many don't know how to ask for help; others don't want family members, friends and co-workers to view them as weak, unconsciously yielding to the misguided cultural idea that asking for help lacks strength. The good news is that telemedicine appears to be chipping away at these roadblocks by offering accessibility and connectivity while also slowly removing the stigma associated with reaching out for support.

In a 2016 study published by *The Lancet Psychiatry*, it was reported that “For the U.S., every \$1 invested in expanded treatment for depression and anxiety leads to a return of \$4 in better health and enhanced labor participation and productivity.” Further,

improved mental health within society offers more than just economic rewards and improved personal well-being: a 2011 study conducted over the span of 19 countries produced data that revealed that mental illness increased the likelihood of divorce by up to 80%.

AN EXPONENTIAL NEED

Since the pandemic, the number of people seeking assistance with depression has skyrocketed. Whether struggling to cope with the stress of the pandemic in general, dealing with illness within one's familial and friend circle, adjusting to a new work-home balance, or pushing oneself to quickly learn new ways to accomplish one's workload, across the board, individuals have indicated that they feel burnt out, especially when it comes to work. Indeed, the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy reported that COVID-19 has tripled the rate of depression in U.S. adults throughout all demographic groups. As unfortunate as that is, the spotlight and a more welcoming perspective on mental health care may prove to provide society with a better path in the future.

According to the FAIR Health's recent white paper, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Pediatric Mental Health," for the age group 13–18 in April 2020, "claim lines for generalized anxiety disorder increased 93.6 percent as a percentage of all medical claim lines over April 2019, while major depressive disorder claim lines increased 83.9 percent and adjustment disorder claim lines 89.7 percent." Furthermore, as it regards overdoses for the 13–18 age group, the FAIR Health white paper finds that "there was an increase of 94.91 percent as a percentage of all medical claim lines in March 2020 and 119.31 percent in April 2020 over the same months the year before. Claim lines for substance use disorders also increased as a percentage of all medical claim lines in March (64.64 percent) and April (62.69 percent) 2020 as compared to their corresponding months in 2019."

Teladoc's October 2020 study release noted that mental health virtual care visits went up 79% for men and 75% for women since January of that year. This rise in virtual care usage goes far beyond convenience, safety and affordable access. This confidential and accessible service provides tools and support previously inaccessible and shunned. While virtual care will never replace the need for in-person care, it can act as a life preserver for those in need and a springboard to more in-depth services for those who might never have reached out if it were not for the instant and convenient access of telemedicine.

A POSITIVE FORCE

The ups and downs of 2020 certainly provided an environment in which the entire population collectively felt stuck, vulnerable,

isolated and a level of stress in a way many of us have never experienced. And maybe it is that collective experience that has allowed us as a society to break through the barrier of accepting the positives of mental health support. It seems, at the very least, the notion of seeking help for mental health as a weakness is slowly and steadily fading.

If society continues to take a positive path of changing the mindset on mental health care, it could have wide sweeping effects. The future is bright for the telemedicine segment — and individuals, businesses and society as a whole will be better off for it. From the ashes of a pandemic and economic crisis may rise a mental health movement that could draw the focus of businesses looking to improve productivity. They will realize a workforce with improved mental health can lead to increased productivity, a better company culture and progress at every level.

In short, the Greek philosopher Thales's view on health — "A sound mind in a sound body" — held true in 2020, which has shown businesses firsthand that a workforce of sound minds helps produce a business with a sound body. And, at the end of the day, no matter how you look at it, a more accepting outlook on mental health care is definitely a good thing.

SPECIAL SAVINGS FOR ALA MEMBERS

For the last 10 years, Carlson's company, Benefit Intelligence, has worked with GLJ Benefit Consultants to help provide ALA member firms with access to valuable benefits, including Teladoc's no-copay telemedicine program and SupportLinc's employee assistance program. Learn more at gljbenefitconsultants.com.

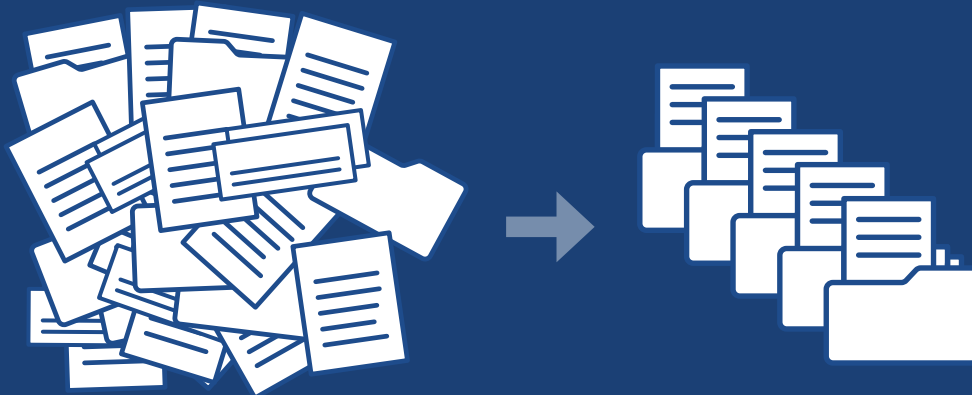
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Charles Carlson is President and Chief Executive Officer of Benefit Intelligence. For the past 40 years, Carlson has worked as a business partner and health care innovator bringing people, resources and ideas together to architect new solutions. He specializes in self-funding employer benefits and managed care fields, risk management, virtual care and administrative services, and he consults with employers to analyze their needs, prioritize their goals and provide resources that streamline costs and improve the overall benefits package.

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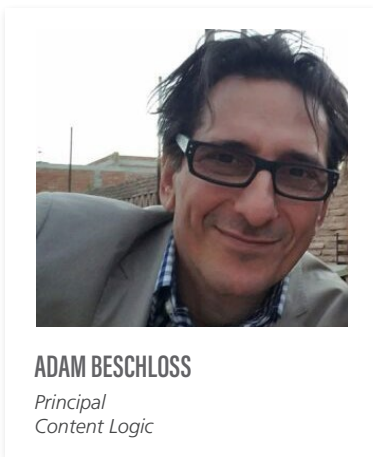
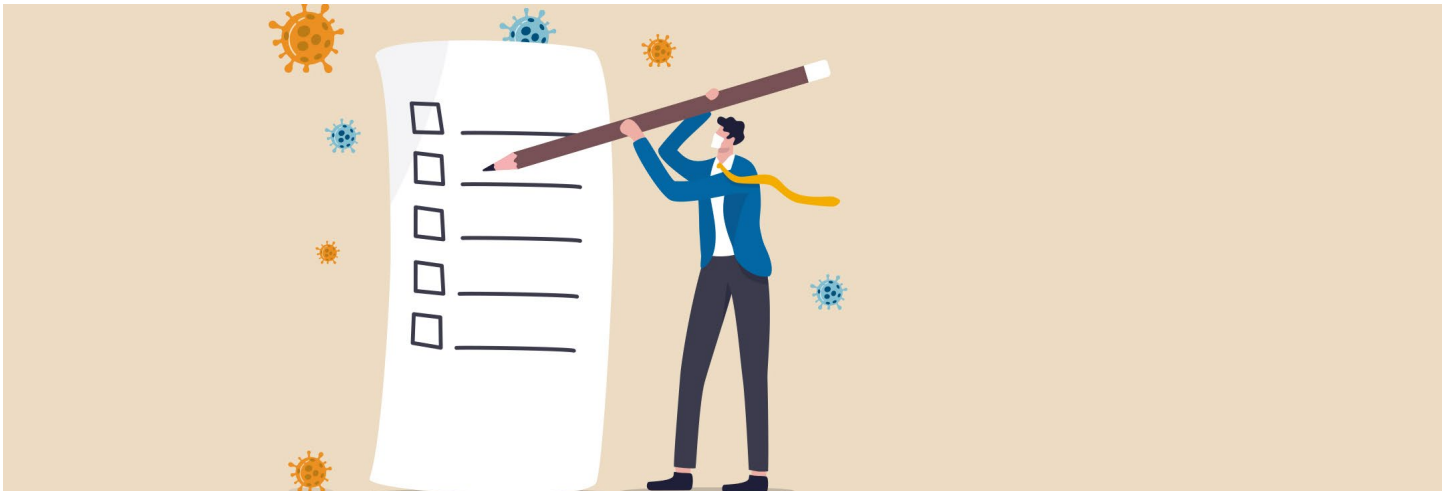
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ADAM BESCHLOSS
Principal
Content Logic

When Disaster Strikes, Why Do Some Thrive While Others Struggle?

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be an unprecedented disruption to business — a marked understatement in some sectors. But that prompts the question: Why do some businesses, competing within the same industry serving similar clients, just *hang on* while others *thrive*? I spoke with three leaders in the alternative legal services industry to see if we could put a finger on it.

(Author's note: All three leaders consider themselves highly privileged to be able to continue working during COVID-19. They spoke movingly about the social toll it exacted from family, friends and colleagues. I present here a business-focused discussion only.)

Much has been written on transitioning to work from home, the resultant cultural challenges and its impact (benefit and decrement) to employee productivity and morale. Perhaps most written about is the widespread adoption of collaboration tools like GoToMeeting, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Slack, and the resulting data security and information governance policy ramifications.

These collaboration tools, while important, are surely not the difference between success or failure for those adopting their use. Not to relitigate the highly controversial 2003 article "IT Doesn't Matter," but these tools do not confer a competitive advantage any more than your phone does. Their adoption to support an increasingly remote workforce is.

"Having tools to support internal and external communication is just table stakes, has been for years," says David Greetham, Ricoh Legal's Vice President of Sales and Operations.

So what does confer competitive advantage?

“The same qualities I look for in a professional to serve them well in a business as usual environment are, I think, the same qualities that will enable them to thrive in a highly challenging one.”

PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS

Like the health dangers of COVID-19, the potential for businesses to prevail during this crisis may have much to do with pre-existing conditions.

Greetham pioneered moving e-discovery into the public cloud, centralizing the data, while his team operates remotely. This requires strong communications protocols and inculcating a culture that supports a distributed workforce. “Culture dictates how well you can flex — not just your service offerings, but your mindset. It boils down to culture and how we operate,” he says. With this model, operating within COVID-19 constraints was largely business as usual for his team.

Ram Vasudevan, Founder and Chief Executive Officer at QuisLex, agrees that culture and mindset are key. “When something this disruptive occurs, you need the same entrepreneurial grit and resolve,” he notes. It’s part of what helped them grow from 3 to more than 1,000 employees. “That out-of-the-box thinking that got you to survive and succeed in the early stages of the company: the ability to react, adapt, survive and thrive.”

Like Ricoh, QuisLex also has a strong culture and support systems enabling internal and client-facing collaboration. Successfully offshoring legal services is greatly dependent upon it. However, operationally, in contrast to Ricoh, COVID-19 presented a real operational challenge to QuisLex.

One QuisLex value proposition is the permanently staffed lawyers centralized to their operations center in Hyderabad, India. While particularly important in the early days of offshoring to assuage concerns about network availability, data security, quality and other controls, it continues to be highly valued by QuisLex clients today. But lockdowns rendered this value proposition no longer viable (at least temporarily). What now? Flex, adapt and thrive.

“Because of our culture, the people we attract tend to have that entrepreneurial spirit whether in IT or operations,” says Vasudevan. “We all got together and came up with the best way to meet these challenges. We did it remarkably fast.”

Aileen Chan, a Principal in KPMG LLP’s Forensic practice, has a similar perspective regarding people and culture. “The same qualities I look for in a professional to serve them well in a business as usual environment are, I think, the same qualities that will enable them to thrive in a highly challenging one.”

While KPMG is structured to support consultants on the road, they also have a large number of professionals that routinely work in their offices. As such, COVID-19 did present some



operational challenges. However, “when I look at the challenge that was presented to us, we were able to pivot in many different directions,” says Chan.

All three leaders make the case for culture, adaptability and flexibility in the mental models and operating models necessary to “react, adapt and thrive.” But there is one more critical factor in this: the client.

FLATTENING THE CURVE

You may be “able to pivot in many different directions,” as Chan puts it, but what if your clients are not prepared to “pivot” with you? COVID-19 had a profound impact on this client-provider dynamic — a change that was particularly profound in the legal services industry, a profession especially bound by precedence and tradition.

“The pandemic has ‘flattened the curve’ on acceptance on various things,” says Vasudevan. “What the pandemic did is relatively quickly ... make obvious that location doesn’t matter. Now everyone works in the same distributed ecosystem. What matters is your knowledge and how you can get work done effectively.”

All agree that understanding your clients’ culture and ecosystem — and their COVID-19 challenges — is as important as understanding your own. “We are asking clients, ‘How is COVID impacting you, and how can we help you?’” says Greetham. Yes, everyone says they are client-facing, but once you dig under the sloganeering, it gets a little vague. These firms not only say they are client-facing but have the infrastructure and operating models to prove it.

NEW (BETTER) NORMAL?

Three organizations with three distinct operating models serving similar (sometimes the same) clients. Some challenges posed by COVID-19 are shared across each firm, while operational challenges are unique to each.

Despite the significant disruption to business and the internal challenges, Chan, Greetham and Vasudevan are all remarkably outward- and forward-looking — another key difference between surviving and thriving.

The silver lining in all this? As Chan states, “From a business perspective, positive things can come from this experience, too. We can take these forward and look to incorporate them into our future models.”

New normal? No. For these three, it’s something better.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Beschloss is Principal of Content Logic and specializes in thought leadership, B2B marketing and sales enablement writing. He has more than 20 years’ experience in the technology-enabled legal services industry, including leadership positions at a Big Four accounting firm, a renowned global technology company, and a leading alternative legal services provider (ALSP). Beschloss earned his bachelor’s at Columbia University.

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PHILLIP M. PERRY
Freelance Business Writer

“ Law firms utilizing the traditional business model with a very structured environment found themselves scrambling. Those that had already embraced technological change were able to hit the ground running and had fewer negative impacts on their business model.”

COVID-19: One Year Later

In a year of many changes, we examine which ones will have staying power.

All of us have been touched personally and professionally by COVID-19. As the world passes the one-year mark of when everything we knew shifted, legal organizations are grappling with an unprecedented mix of challenges as they strive for profitability while protecting the health of employees and clients.

The foremost challenge is the need to adjust to the work-from-home paradigm. “This was the first time many firms faced the need for remote staffing,” says ALA President Debra Elsbury, CLM, Firm Administrator at Threlkeld Stevenson. How well they have met that need, she adds, depends largely on their level of preparedness prior to the arrival of the pandemic. “Law firms utilizing the traditional business model with a very structured environment found themselves scrambling. Those that had already embraced technological change were able to hit the ground running and had fewer negative impacts on their business model.”

Larger law firms would seem to have a leg up on these matters, given their typically greater technological change. “Big firms were better situated in many ways to handle the change to remote work because most already had geographically dispersed workforces and tried and tested infrastructure, policies and practices for working remotely,” says Brie Leung, Director of Strategy and Marketing at Much Shelist, P.C. “But an organization such as ours — we have around 200 employees, with two offices in Chicago and Newport Beach, California — is very accustomed to doing things in person, just walking down the hall to get what we need. And so changing how we work meant much more than simply changing our technology and processes. A tremendous focus has been placed on internal communication, culture and community efforts, virtual wellness programs and creative client outreach programs.”

“We may be working with the same client in seven or eight locations. In some places we can go to court and trial while in others we may need to do everything by video. Clients want us to be moving cases along, and sometimes we just can’t.”

MANAGING STAFF

Hurdles remain even for those law firms able to pivot on a technological pin. A case in point is Galloway, Johnson, Tompkins, Burr & Smith. While the firm was able to leverage its earlier adoption of cloud computing following Hurricane Katrina in 2006, the pandemic still created difficulties when it came to monitoring staff productivity.

“When our legal assistants, paralegals and administrative folks are not in the office, it’s more difficult to make sure they’re doing what they’re supposed to be doing during the workday,” says firm Chief Financial Officer A. Ray Lightell, Jr., CLM, CPA.

While attorneys can be monitored in terms of billable hours, administrative staff members require regular engagements with supervisors via Zoom or conference call. That level of monitoring, though, is not without drawback: costly supervisory time. While software may be able to help track work hours, Lightell feels the effort to manage remotely remains a work in progress. “Honestly, I don’t think any of us are managing the administrative staff well enough,” he says.

Firms with scattered locations face another problem: dealing with a confusing patchwork of state, county and municipal remote working regulations. Galloway, for example, has 12 offices in seven states. In Louisiana, the firm’s offices in Lafayette and New Orleans are subject to different regulations affecting both the law firm and the courts. Adding to the confusion is the fact that federal courts tend to follow what the federal judiciary’s administrative agency in Washington, D.C., advises, while state courts follow their own state regulations.

Such patchwork regulations can upset clients. “We may be working with the same client in seven or eight locations,” says Lightell. “In some places we can go to court and trial while in others we may need to do everything by video. Clients want us to be moving cases along, and sometimes we just can’t.”

Thankfully, most people are understanding. “Most clients are very receptive to the challenges we have to deal with because they’re dealing with the same things on their end.”

Because courts are conducting hearings — and even some trials — virtually, there’s a whole new dynamic to trial preparation and presentation, notes Scott Brennan, Chief Executive Officer of Lexicon, a practice management provider. “Now, attorneys have to prepare their clients and witnesses to act and present themselves in a respectful manner sitting behind a keyboard and monitor as if they were in an actual courtroom.”

CLOSER BONDS

As the legal community enters its second year of the pandemic, law firms will continue to grapple with a changed environment, taking actions such as reducing their real estate footprint, improving communications for remote locations, reducing staff inefficiencies, and dealing with changing regulations.

Technology will doubtlessly play a role in these efforts. And while a mix of bits and bytes and equipment cables may seem impersonal, technology can, paradoxically, bring people closer together. Take, for example, RatnerPrestia, PC, where Chief Operating Officer Barbara A. Foley, CLM, found herself spending a large amount of time every day interacting with people on Zoom calls, making sure she understood their issues and helping them adjust to the new norm.



Technology became the key to human bonding. "Prior to the pandemic I could not be in all of our offices at the same time, so I did not have the opportunity to walk around and see people the way that I could see them with Zoom," says Foley. "When you see people on camera every day you get to know them in a much different way. You see their surroundings, their children, their pets and, of course, their challenges."

Foley also used technology to launch a daily virtual coffee klatch to get all employees engaged in the early morning. "While some people are naturally motivated when working remotely, others have issues getting started," says Foley. "The morning meeting forces everyone to get dressed and get in front of the camera. Our discussions are not necessarily work-related but proceed as if we were standing in our kitchens at our respective offices. This has been a big help in keeping the whole group together." She says other activities included a virtual Halloween party, a Thanksgiving luncheon, happy hours and a virtual holiday lunch complete with entertainment. Foley expects the Zoom sessions and the morning coffee klatch to continue once the pandemic is over.

The unexpected result was a deeper understanding of employees. "I got to know all of our people — attorneys, staff, paralegals — much more intimately and personally than I did before," says Foley. "That personalization has led to an increase in morale and motivation."

BETTER TIMES

As legal managers grapple with the challenges posed in the last year, many believe that practices required by the pandemic will still prevail remain in a post-pandemic world.

"I have people who have requested to work from home permanently, and I have approved those requests," says Foley.

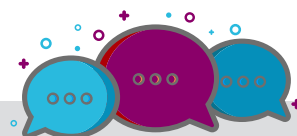
"I have other folks who can't wait to get back to the office, and I have some that want to work in a hybrid model — that's also fine." Foley believes that trusting employees and giving them tools they need to succeed is the key.

The dark cloud of the pandemic, then, may have a silver lining. "The pandemic really forced law firms to figure some things out that have been a long time coming, and in a way that will actually be beneficial to our long-term success as organizations," says Leung. "The pandemic is making us into stronger organizations for the future and really shining a light on how we can and should embrace new ways to help our people and our clients thrive."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phillip M. Perry is an award-winning business journalist with over 20 years of experience under his belt. A three-time recipient of the American Bar Association's Edge Award for editorial achievement, Perry freelances out of his New York City office. His byline has appeared over 3,000 times in the nation's business press.

 editorialcalendar.net



JOIN THE DISCUSSION

Don't forget to check out our Online Community forum exclusively dedicated to COVID-19, as well — members from all over North America are sharing their insights about how to handle this unique situation. Check it out at community.alanet.org/plfolsi/topic=583.

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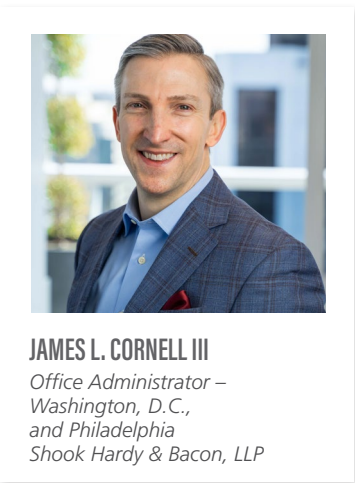
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2021
PROUD SUPPORTER



Making Mental Health Matter

A real conversation about creating an agenda of change in legal organizations.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

As leaders and managers in the business of law, we have an opportunity to speak out on mental health to establish an agenda of change. Creating a culture of openness will help us normalize conversations about mental health and well-being. The more we know and understand about the correlation between mental well-being, a supportive workplace culture and an engaged, satisfied workforce, the better we will be at creating environments in our organizations where employees feel valued, cared for and part of the shared vision.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss the truths and myths about mental health.
2. Recognize signs of distress in co-workers, as well as yourself.
3. Review ways to approach conversations about mental health.
4. Examine the role legal managers play in shifting culture within an organization.
5. Identify resources available to assist with mental well-being.

One of my favorite Rolling Stones songs is “You Can’t Always Get What You Want,” with its theme focused on the essence of optimism and eventual disillusion, followed by resigned pragmatism of “you get what you need.” This has been my personal experience the last several years. It’s also how this course came to be, along with a confession to an ALA colleague that my life was not going as I thought it would.

I mentioned that I was deeply sad, felt lost and alone, and that I’d recently started therapy. Her response surprised me. She said “good for you” and that admitting such things takes courage. It wasn’t the reaction I thought I would hear from her, yet it was



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exactly what I needed — encouragement that had me feeling understood and seen as the opposite of broken or ill. For the first time in a long time, I felt like myself and wanted to do something bold with that feeling. This course is a component of that boldness.

This course is about learning to help those we work with — as well as ourselves — in a compassionate, supportive and nonjudgmental way with the desired outcome of being able to be our best selves in our personal and professional lives. To achieve this, I've asked for assistance from a couple of people I know who have a passion for helping others be their best.

Let's get started.

IT'S NOT JUST LAWYERS

According to the 2017 Mental Health in the Workplace report by the World Federation for Mental Health, mental illness among employees costs companies in the United States an estimated \$2.5 trillion per year.¹ And the number is expected to rise to \$6 trillion by 2030. Emotional difficulties affect employees' ability to concentrate, make decisions, problem-solve and interact collaboratively with colleagues and clients. When employees are not well, performance suffers. The pandemic and the subsequent isolation it induced have only exacerbated these issues.

"The legal profession attracts intellectually competent, high-achieving individuals who generally prefer to think rather than feel their emotions," says Bella Sterling, MS, MA, a Resident Counselor specializing in trauma, relationship issues and family counseling. "As a result, the distinction between being dedicated to the profession and being enslaved by it gets blurry.

As legal management professionals, we are very aware of the staggering statistics of depression and substance abuse in the legal field. In fact, the American Bar Association launched a Well-Being Campaign to address substance-use disorders and mental health challenges in our industry.

But those statistics largely focus on attorneys, overlooking the other legal staff who are in no way immune to the same issues. There is little research done on the "emotional labor" that paralegals and legal secretaries perform by staying calm, deferential and reassuring to clients while also facing unscheduled demands for research and preparation put on them by their superiors.²

It's not surprising then that individuals in the legal industry suffer from higher incidences of anxiety, social alienation, isolation and depression than the general population. Research



shows that the rates of depression in the legal community are higher than among doctors, dentists, teachers and clergy.³ The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health found that male lawyers aged 20 to 64 are more than twice as likely to die from suicide as men the same age in a different occupation.³

"Add to the mix long hours, lack of autonomy, intense competition [and] job insecurity, and the environment becomes a breeding ground for psychological distress and mental illness," says Sterling.

This rang very true for me. For the last two years, my distress had been accumulating. I moved from Austin, Texas, after accepting a position with a firm managing their office in Washington, D.C. My position also entailed overseeing a construction project for new office space. I found myself in a new city, with a new job and as ALA's new President-Elect. Not long after, I was also managing another office in Philadelphia. Then the week before I became ALA President, I was overseeing an office move.

I'd had an active 12 months, and the excitement of my term as President was only just beginning. In reality, I was a wreck. I don't think I realized just how much of one I was because I simply kept trying to keep up with all that was going on around me. Learning a new role at work and taking on the role of President of the Association's Board of Directors meant lots of time spent figuring those things out. I felt burned out and uncertain if I was doing a good job at work or in my volunteer role. I was in a new city without any social or support network to turn to; it was a lonely time. There was also not much time left over for anything else; joy and happiness in any part of my life was hard to find.



CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

There is more to this topic than we could fit into this article. So Bella Sterling, MS, MA, joined us on *Legal Management Talk* to dive into this issue more. We cover some of the myths that surround mental health and why it's so hard to ask for help. Plus, we discuss why the pandemic is helping us face these issues. Listen at alanet.org/podcast.

I didn't set out to have a crisis or to find myself in such a dark place, yet that's exactly where I landed. So as our organizations went remote because of the pandemic, we began managing employees working from home and tried to monitor their well-being during this challenging time. But I found myself again neglecting my own well-being.

It finally occurred to me that in my present condition I was not in the best shape to lead or manage people. Rather than continue to do what I had always done before in difficult times — just keep on keeping on — I sent an email and asked for help.

I wonder now why it took me so long to do that or why things had to fall apart before I asked for assistance. I believe part of the explanation is in the stigma our society associates with mental health, which is especially rife in the perfectionist culture of the legal industry. Turns out, I'm not alone in that. Sterling says one of the particularly toxic myths that keeps many people from seeking help is believing that mental health issues are a sign of character weakness.

"From a standpoint of a therapist, the truth is often just the opposite," she says. "People who struggle with mental illness must work extra hard to continue functioning in a society taking care of families, jobs and pets despite the misery they are facing on the inside."

RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF DISTRESS IN CO-WORKERS — AND YOURSELF

I'm certainly not the only person experiencing these heavy feelings. In fact, statistics on mental health in the United States reflect that as a society we are not well. In 2013, one in six adults was taking a psychiatric drug such as an antidepressant or a sedative. In 2016, the number of psychiatric prescriptions increased from 32.73 million to 45.64 million.⁴ According to a report released by the National Center for Health Statistics in March 2020, the rate of antidepressant use in this country among teens and adults has increased by 400% between 1988 and 2008.

"Initially, I was shocked to hear that almost half of all adults living in the United States will experience a mental health challenge at some point over the course of their lifetime and that many do not seek professional help. Then, I looked back over my lifetime and it did not strike me as shocking anymore. We all go through difficult times," says Astrid Emond, MSOD, IP Administration, Trademark and Learning Manager at Cooley LLP.

Research confirms that emotional distress among employees leads to loss of productivity, staff turnover and presenteeism, defined as showing up for work but not performing due to anxiety, depression or addictions.⁵

Emond recently went through a mental health first-aid certification course organized by Mental Health First Aid USA and managed by the National Council for Behavioral Health. The course helps people understand and respond to other people with mental health challenges, disorders or crises, and helps raise awareness of mental health in general.

"The instructors in the course were very clear that mental health first aiders do not diagnose or treat mental health challenges; instead, they are to observe possible signs and symptoms of mental health challenges," says Emond. Signs and symptoms might include an unusually sad mood, lack of energy and tiredness, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, becoming agitated and unable to settle, changes in appearance and personal hygiene, and continually arriving late to work. A certified mental health first aider trains to assess risk, listen without judgment, provide reassurance and information, and connect a person to professional help.

Sterling says signs of emotional distress can vary. However, on the level of a human nervous system, the first function that suffers under stress is one's capacity for social engagement. When someone looks withdrawn, tense or lethargic or appears irritable and aggressive during a conversation, these are signs that their nervous system is in overdrive and has shifted from the social engagement function to either a "fight or flight" or "freeze" mode.⁶

“Managers will want to pay attention when an employee who is exhibiting difficulty with mood regulation is also not replying to emails or returning calls, for instance,” says Sterling. “When these warning signs are present, the best approach is to suggest a one-on-one conversation.”

The Mental Health First Aid course also highlighted the importance of self-care — something Emond has become a firm believer in after suffering a significant health scare years ago. “We’ve heard the instruction on airplanes to ‘put your oxygen mask on first before helping others’ or ‘you can’t pour from an empty cup.’ We need to ensure that we are taking care of ourselves if we want to help others. I appreciated getting a template to create a self-care plan considering various domains. Doing this will help when stress builds,” Emond says.

Even though it’s not easy, try to encourage colleagues that some days it’s OK that you’re not OK and to reach out for support.

“As we all know, this past year has brought many difficulties. I remember one rough day in particular. I could not focus, my heart was in pain, and I chose to reach out to my teammates (and boss) and share my struggles in a rather clumsy way,” Emond says. “The support I got was overwhelming — and many shared similar feelings. Letting go of what I thought I should be doing and saying in the workplace and deciding to be vulnerable and transparent allowed me to have deeper conversations and connections at work. And to my surprise, others opened up to me. As a result, I feel closer to my colleagues. Rather than feeling weak for being vulnerable, I felt my spirits lifted and stronger to face the day.”

HOW TO APPROACH CONVERSATIONS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Although it is usually job pressure and negative work culture that lead to mental distress, law firms are generally the last to step in to help, notes Sterling. “As more workplaces recognize that it is in their best interest to invest in the well-being of their employees, legal management professionals will need to adjust their perspective on mental health services, dispelling the stigma and mystery that still surrounds them.”

“When others let their guard down and are vulnerable with me, I try to do whatever I can to support them. Generally, it starts with asking what they need,” Emond says.

Responding to an individual’s distress with compassion is a good approach to take. The key to working with an employee

“Managers will want to pay attention when an employee who is exhibiting difficulty with mood regulation is also not replying to emails or returning calls, for instance. When these warning signs are present, the best approach is to suggest a one-on-one conversation.”

in distress is not to sound punitive or judgmental. Sterling suggests a statement like “I noticed you’ve not been returning emails and missed a few deadlines. It seems out of character for you and got me concerned.”

The most useful skill for dealing with distressed employees is to be comfortable with raw emotion. Jumping in too quickly with helpful suggestions is not as beneficial as simply listening and staying receptive. “Listening to listen, not to respond” is a good rule to remember.⁷

“I also learned that people are more likely to seek help when someone close to them suggests it,” Emond says. “Just imagine the impact each of us can have by looking out for someone we know and suggesting help. I am happy to have tools that can help me address my concerns for someone.”

Whatever the conversation might be, Sterling says the intention should be placed on the well-being of the employee. “If the individual is encouraged to take time off, it is best to reach out by email or phone every few days and check in. The expression of concern is healing to all humans and will remind an individual that their workplace is a place of support,” she says.

And don’t shy away from asking whether the employee would consider talking to a mental health professional — with an assurance of full confidentiality.

It might also help to approach counseling in terms of coaching. “Rather than seeing counseling help as the last resort for an employee in crisis, managers are encouraged to view counseling on par with coaching,” Sterling says. “The coaching industry is booming in the United States, and coaches are often used by law firms to provide a performance edge to high-achieving employees. Similarly, counseling services can be viewed as a collaboration on how to successfully navigate stresses of a high-competition, high-pressure, high-stakes industry.”

THE ROLE LEGAL MANAGERS PLAY IN SHIFTING CULTURE WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION

As legal managers, we are well-versed in change management. It's knowledge that can be used to help move mental health conversations forward in our legal organizations.

Emond points to organizational development expert Edgar Schein's culture work, where he suggests the "tools" leaders have available to teach organizations how to perceive, think, feel and behave based on their own conscious and unconscious convictions. They include:⁸

1. What a leader attends to, measures, rewards and controls is the main factor affecting culture.
2. How leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises (do they get defensive, go on the attack, support, blame?).
3. How leaders allocate resources.
4. Deliberate role modeling, teaching and coaching.
5. How leaders allocate rewards and status.

In the context of mental health in the legal industry, Emond says to consider what we do to measure and support the mental health of employees. "It is important that our espoused value of mental health in the industry is supported by our culture. We need to consider if that is the message we want to send to our employees. Self-care and mental health need to become a higher priority."

For example, firms might encourage people to take time off; however, the policies might reward those who take little to no time off. Or firms might encourage people to take care of their mental health, but when an employee needs a late start to work because of something that happened to them in the morning, flexibility isn't allowed.

Yet promoting work-life balance is essential for keeping employees healthy. Managers must be proactive in reaching out, scheduling check-ins and face-to-face time, and encouraging employees to take time off, as many might be reluctant to use PTO when working from home. Giving employees a choice in organizing their work schedule and encouraging them to take time off to dedicate to family, sports and relaxation must be priorities.

Self-care is something Emond models at her firm. "One way to [do] that is to take PTO — even during a pandemic when I am unable to travel or visit family," Emond says. "I take PTO so I can recharge my body and mind by getting outdoors. I am lucky to live close enough to a National Forest and National

"Counseling services can be viewed as a collaboration on how to successfully navigate stresses of a high-competition, high-pressure, high-stakes industry."

Park. I tell people about my hikes partially to normalize taking time out for oneself. Then, I encourage them to take time out for whatever brings them joy or just to rest."

Emond says let each individual find what self-care means to them, then encourage them to practice it without guilt or worry about judgment. "Not to say we should never work late — we are legal administrators and sometimes there are fires — however, if the fires are a daily occurrence, we need to reevaluate what this does to us and whether it is the culture we want to promote for others."

MOVING FORWARD

The pandemic exacerbated the issues of depression, fear and isolation that are already prevalent among the legal profession. In addition to the regular demands of work, there is a collective sense of dread that makes all people more vulnerable to psychological distress. There are also pressures of childcare and lack of social interactions that contribute to the feeling of doom and gloom, says Sterling.

Stigma surrounding mental health creates a challenge for those who struggle to find support among colleagues. The façade of perfectionism among peers may lead individuals to believe that they are the only ones struggling and, therefore, should toughen it up and keep going. But that's not a sustainable practice, as I myself found out. It's something I hope this article can start to change for our industry.

"I am trying to pay closer attention to others, listen deeper, be supportive and admit to being human and fallible. I want to promote self-care for mental well-being, raise awareness around mental health, and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help," says Emond.

But the industry itself needs to do some self-examination, Sterling says. It is important to point out that there is a danger in interpreting employee's distress in a workplace only in terms of individual troubles to be addressed by medication, resiliency trainings and well-being strategies.⁹ Such approach would make the individual bear what the profession as a collective should take responsibility for.⁹

“One client described to me how his law firm hosted a workshop designed to assist with emotional regulation. Even though over 300 people showed up for the workshop, my client felt vulnerable to exposing himself by participating in the workshop,” says Sterling. “‘If you are feeling weak, you can’t show it,’ he stated.” Despite skyrocketing rates of depression among lawyers, it is still rare to hear someone in the law profession openly admit to mental health problems.¹⁰

Multiple reports point to the necessity of changing the culture in which employees lack autonomy, work unreasonably long hours, have minimal control over workloads and where work demands outstrip an individual’s ability to cope with these demands. On top of introducing specialized programs that teach employees meditation, mindfulness and relaxation techniques, there also must be a movement to implement policies for how mental health issues will be treated in regulatory processes. “For instance, fighting bullying, discrimination and inappropriate behaviors in the workplace are all part of shifting the culture and addressing challenges in law community systemically,” says Sterling.

It is worth mentioning that most well-being initiatives in legal communities are directed toward lawyers, but that also needs to shift. Sterling says such a culture is bound to propagate mental distress equally among lawyers as well as their support staff.

And as legal managers, we can play a part in moving this conversation forward — given all that 2020 threw our way, such conversations are more vital than ever.

“My hope is to help remove barriers someone might experience seeking care — stigma being one of those barriers,” Emond says. We seek help when we experience physical challenges; seeking help for mental challenges should be just as common practice. Recovery and mental health are possible.

When life deals us unexpected twists and turns and we find ourselves off course and out of sorts, there is no shame in admitting that. Life is not easy; in fact it’s often difficult, and seeking assistance navigating these challenges and having open conversations about them is something we as legal management professionals can model in our organizations so those we work with do not have to feel alone in their distress or pursuit of contentment. The Rolling Stones understood that and are indeed the same band that once sang “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” and later confessed you don’t always get what you want — but finding what you need may actually be best.

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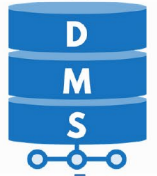
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“If you, like us, want a discreet tablet that simulates very closely the paper and pen writing experience, reMarkable is for you.”

Prefer to Take Notes by Hand? We've Got a "reMarkable" Solution

Despite all the love we have for gadgets and automation devices that do essential work for us, we still love and insist on taking notes by hand during important meetings, conferences and presentations. Call us old-fashioned, but we hate pecking at a keyboard when meeting with clients one-on-one or in other smaller meetings.

We are constantly on the lookout for technology that will enhance the note-taking process, especially when doing it by hand. We finally have found what we believe to be the holy grail of electronic note-taking, and the result is quite remarkable — literally. The name of the device that we purchased is called the reMarkable 2 tablet.

This second-generation tablet is really the best platform we have tried to date for taking notes by hand on an electronic device. The reMarkable tablet features what is known as e-ink technology, which is akin to the monochrome display made popular by the Amazon Kindle. The display measures 10.3 inches and feels similar in size to an iPad. But reMarkable is no iPad. For starters, it doesn't have apps, can't play games or movies and doesn't display in color. It strictly is an electronic writing or sketching pad. So, if you are looking for an iPad replacement device, move along. But if you, like us, want a discreet tablet that simulates very closely the paper and pen writing experience, reMarkable is for you.

We have used the Apple Pencil and other pens and styli on various phones and tablets in the past, but we can honestly say that nothing feels as authentic as the reMarkable tablet and pen in replicating the feel of writing on a pad of paper. The reMarkable's pen (sold separately) has replaceable tips that wear out over time. But it really does create

a type of friction that you would feel when writing with a real pencil or pen on physical paper. The reMarkable tablet lets you choose which type of writing device you want to simulate: ballpoint pen, marker, fineliner, pencil or even calligraphy.

You can set up any number of folders on your reMarkable tablet to organize your notes and other documents. These folders will then sync with a cloud account that you create when you first log in to the tablet. With the corresponding app that you can install on your PC or phone, you can sync documents to and from the reMarkable cloud folders, which, in turn, get synced with the physical tablet. You can upload documents via the app, which are then available on your reMarkable tablet after syncing. This feature will essentially let you upload a file folder of documents (PDF only) to the tablet so you can review and mark them up on the reMarkable tablet (in court, for example). Any changes or markups, of course, will be synced back to your cloud account when the tablet is connected to Wi-Fi.

The reMarkable interface allows you to choose a blank canvas or any of a number of predefined templates to write on, such as lined paper, grids, checklists, a day planner, music charts, dots, etc. You can also send a document — for example, a page of handwritten notes — on the fly via email as a PDF document directly from the reMarkable tablet. The tablet will even convert your handwriting to text and send it as a formatted PDF document via email. We tested this using our very sloppy handwriting — the reMarkable lived up to its name by correctly converting our notes into text. We were quite pleased.

The other thing we enjoy is its extended battery life. The specs say that you can expect about two weeks of use in between charges. Of course, unlike an iPad or other computer-based tablet, the reMarkable is only being used to take notes or review PDF documents, so there is no opportunity to run the battery down playing games or watching videos.

Slightly on the negative side is the price for this tablet: Including the pen, the reMarkable will set you back nearly \$500. We feel that's a little high. While that's a hefty price tag for an electronic notepad, we've yet to find anything we enjoy better.

Another negative is that the pen. It magnetically connects to the side of the tablet, which makes it too easy to knock loose when transporting the tablet or taking in and out of your briefcase. We recommend keeping its pen somewhere safer.

But the positives on the reMarkable 2 tablet far outweigh the negatives. We truly have found the perfect compromise between keeping our habit of taking notes by hand and having our notes captured electronically in the cloud: The answer is reMarkable, and we love it.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

William Ramsey, Partner at Neal & Harwell, and **Phil Hampton**, Consulting President of LogicForce, are best known for *The Bill and Phil Show*.

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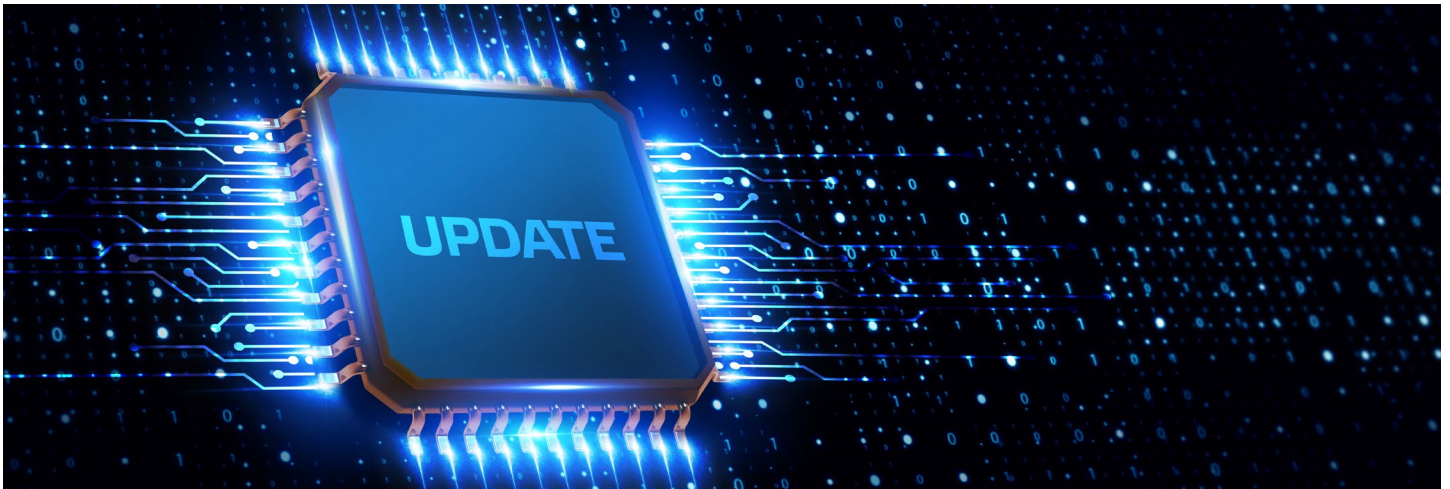


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This year will be critical to the success and evolution of law firms, and we hope that you will participate in that journey with this Association. Make sure you renew your membership, stay involved in the conversation and soak up as much knowledge as you can to help your firm not just weather 2021 but thrive in this year and beyond.

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ALINE MARTIN-O'BRIEN

Writer
Smokeball

Your Vital Role in Implementing a Software Change

The working world experienced unprecedented challenges last year. Law firms in particular had to adapt to working remotely with cloud-based software and implement new technology on the fly. Many firms, hit with demands that tested their people and exposed shortcomings in their systems, budgeted for upgrades to their office management software.

With the first quarter nearly in the books, law firms are launching those software upgrade projects. Here is an overview of what to expect during the process and some ideas for enhancing your contribution as a law firm management professional.

The project will impact the entire firm for years to come, and, like it or not, you will be at the center of the action. Take time every day to consider ways to enhance your contribution:

- **Talk tech.** Include technology assessments and the “tech angle” whenever possible in your communications. Continuously discuss the effectiveness of the firm’s technology, and budget for necessary upgrades and training.
- **Set goals.** This is actually the No. 1 reason software installations fail. Identify *why* you’re changing software. Pay attention to the input of administrative employees and to paralegals, who may be losing time doing repetitive clerical tasks. Set some concrete goals, including:
 - » Automate repetitive processes.
 - » Bill more time/more regularly.
 - » Track firm productivity.
 - » Make informed decisions based on key performance indicators.
- **Communicate the strategy.** Put the goals and key elements of the plan into a short strategy statement — *and communicate it.*

“A knowledgeable administrator can explain and illustrate how every piece of software experiences an issue that needs to be worked out, and that the firm is prepared for the glitches.”

- **Get help.** You've heard the adage about the lawyer representing herself having a fool for a client. The same applies here — you are the client and should have professional advice. Whether you engage a consultant or work with a vendor directly, be sure your experts understand the specific needs of your firm.

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

Even though your firm might be committed at the top, it's no secret that humans resist change — something you may experience even after project kickoff. This human tendency can seriously threaten the success of a software change, even one with high-level support. Here are some of the causes of resistance and suggestions to address them:

- **Comfort.** Many law firms stick with old ways because routines are comfortable and things are not entirely broken. Document the time staff is wasting, along with facts about the improved financial performance associated with switching to a software offering contemporaneous time tracking and automated billing.
- **Fear.** Modern law firms depend on their technology tools, and lawyers fear that if something goes wrong it will ruin a reputation or worse. A knowledgeable administrator can explain and illustrate how every piece of software experiences an issue that needs to be worked out, and that the firm is prepared for the glitches.
- **No strategy.** A lack of strategy or effective communication of the strategy signals that the change is not important and need not be taken seriously. Continuously communicate the goals and the agreed-upon strategy!
- **Ignorance of available resources.** Making the switch to a new software requires strong training and technical support. This support is supplied by the software vendor, either included with the software purchase or via a separate agreement. The firm administrator is an important stakeholder here and should be knowledgeable about and able to communicate the training and support plan.
- **They “tried something before and it didn't work.”** Put doubting partners and department heads in touch with peers at firms who have successfully implemented similar software.

ANTICIPATING THE REST OF THE PROJECT

The entire project will include some or all of the following tasks:

- **Confirm and refine the strategy.** Revisit the project goals throughout the process to stay on track and control project creep.

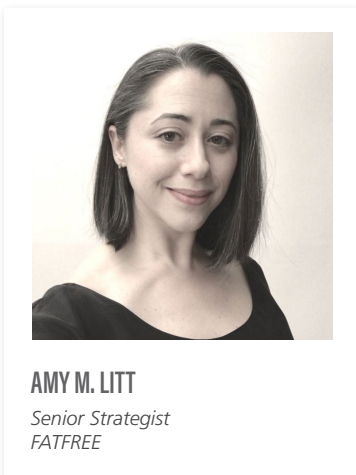
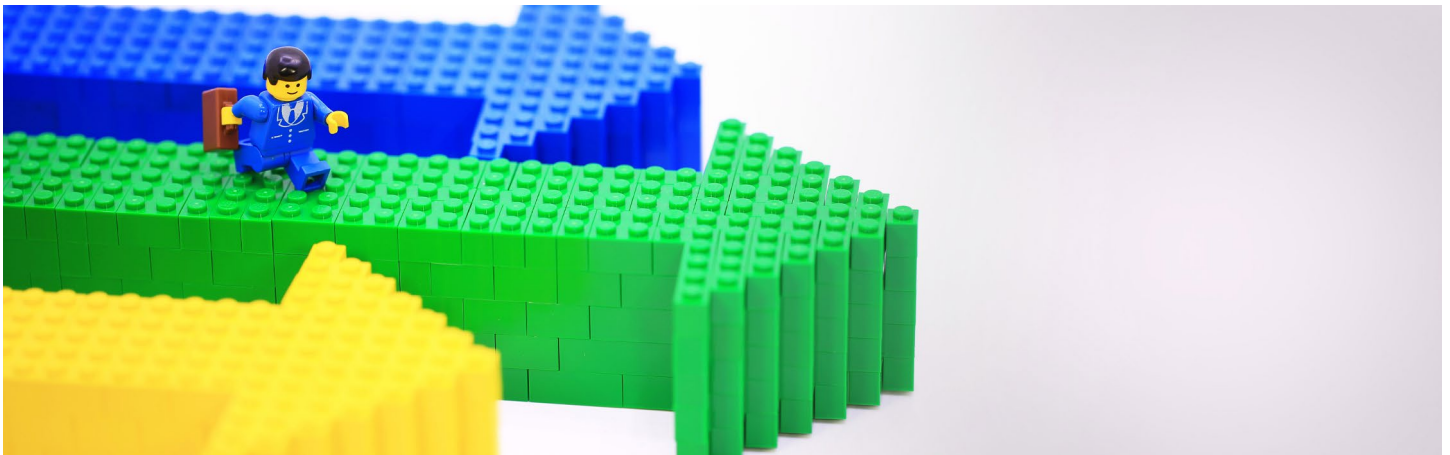


- **Assign roles and responsibilities.** Everyone in the firm has a part in the transition to a new software system. Be sure each knows their role, the expectations and the timeline.
- **Assess current technology.** Make a list of all the software and hardware in use. Will the current hardware handle the new software and expected upgrades?
- **Inventory digital files.** Identify what files exist and where they are located, and determine if they should be discarded or transitioned. Make sure the data you are bringing into the new system is accurate and current.
- **Use a digital archival system to store files.** Determine if digital files should be stored on a hard drive or in the cloud, based on long-term costs, security, accessibility and the scalability of any proposed solution.
- **Back up digital data.** Before you make your technology transition, you should export all data that will be impacted by the change to secure servers or a cloud-based service.
- **Find out what's compatible.** If you've exported data to a software provider, check with that vendor to find out which files can be imported and merged with the new system.
- **Manage hard-copy systems.** Inventory hard copies of paper and digital files and create an archival system. Analyze whether storing hard copies is a feasible solution long term.
- **Hire specialists.** Only very large and very small firms seem to be able to implement a new firmwide software system without some level of temporary help. Your vendor will be able to help scope the needed additional staff.

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Aline Martin-O'Brien is a writer for Smokeball. She previously practiced as an attorney for several years in Paris. She has her master's in Theory and Practice of Procedural Law from the University of Paris: Panthéon-Sorbonne.

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AMY M. LITT
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“Don’t forget to find opportunities to surprise, delight and say thank you. With so many teams working remotely or on hybrid schedules, employees are looking to their employers for leadership, now more than ever.”

Top Talent Wants a Lifestyle, Not a Workplace

In 2020, businesses faced demands for radical transparency. Across the professional service industries, including law, the calls were often coming from inside the house.

Employees and prospective candidates alike are looking closely at employers’ behavior and demanding action when leadership comes up short. These employees may have joined a firm for compensation and career advancement, but now that parity is the norm, will they stay? In 2021, your firm’s values, messaging and reputation — your brand — will be more important than ever. Firms that look to the best practices of successful lifestyle brands will stand the best chance of attracting and retaining top talent this year.

BEING TRANSPARENT BENEFITS EVERYONE

Whether you attract industry vets or new graduates, you probably already know they have a similar vision of your brand as your clients. Many hires, especially those in management, largely define themselves by their employer and its outward-facing reputation. It’s critical that your recruitment process aligns with the identity you want to build as a firm, that you are speaking to your target audiences’ decision-making drivers.

Make sure your brand guidelines include a mission statement, values or tone of voice. Given the difference between who you are hiring and who is hiring you, you may consider creating a sub-brand just for recruiting. Next, take a look at your firm’s website, social media and any other recruiting tactics. Are you consistently articulating who you are as an organization? And are you doing so in a way that is relevant to your ideal candidate? The best lifestyle brands know exactly who their customers are and what they want. You can use the same approach to be attractive and memorable to top talent.

Finally, take a look at your careers page and the job listings posted. In particular, potential employees want to know that you've given a lot of thought to their health and safety. What is your work-from-home policy? How are you addressing diversity and inclusion at all levels? How are you supporting those caring for family? What support resources are available? Answering these essential questions up front will show your understanding of the candidate's concerns.

START A "NOW HIRING" NEWSLETTER

Your clients get proactive, individualized treatment so why not take the same approach to top-notch hires? Right now, job hunters know that digital networking is more important than ever, which is why they're looking beyond job boards and signing up for a multitude of newsletters so that they can stay on top of fresh positions and related industry news. Your firm can easily provide this content — your career openings, your unique perspective on how you and your industry have adapted to the uncertainty of the last year, as well as the new challenges and opportunities that exist. Bragging a bit about recent new clients or completed projects can also build confidence in your business's stability. Your careers page is a great place to add a sign-up button for this newsletter. A competitive hire might not be ready to submit an application, but they'll almost certainly appreciate the effort you put into being a thought leader in your field and will sign up for your newsletter in return.

IS YOUR HIRING PROCESS A TURNOFF?

Hiring is a multistep process, from the initial application to the final interview. When was the last time you did a quick review of your process?

It's a common complaint: Qualified and interested candidates are often turned off by a clunky online application. If your company requires applicants to re-enter their résumé in a time-consuming form, ask yourself if this process has any measurable benefit to you. Many applicants, especially high-value ones, will chafe at this task when they could simply attach their résumé or a link to their portfolio. At the same time, it's OK to create different applications for different positions, according to your needs. The goal is to ensure that you get the information you need from your prospective hires, and they feel like they're able to present their best selves, so that you can start choosing who to interview.

People have become used to an intuitive user experience and constant status updates. Show respect for candidates'

time and investment. Be transparent about any tests you'll be giving, whether the work performed will be paid, and how that work may be used in the future. These are pain points for many job seekers and the sooner you get out in front of them, the more trust your applicants will have in you and your brand. Overall, addressing your ability to offer a streamlined, intuitive and customized hiring experience at every turn will certainly make your company appear more attractive in the eyes of a potential hire.

STAY IN COMMUNICATION

It's safe to assume that the person you're recruiting is interviewing at other places as well. Throughout the interview process, it's important to stay in communication. Staying on top of the process and keeping the applicant informed not only provides clarity, but makes your brand look organized and efficient. Remember when you were looking for work and how frustrating it was to be led on or to be the one to always initiate the follow-up? Take that into account and let applicants know where they stand in the process.

HAVE A PLAN FOR KEEPING EMPLOYEES HAPPY

Now that you have put in the effort to bring in top talent, you need to keep them. After all, brand loyalty counts just as much in employee retention as customer retention. Working a fast-paced job in the current environment is, to be frank, brutal. Make sure you and your team are engaging in robust internal communications, creating a safe work environment for all types of people and ensuring that your employees' work is the ticket to career advancement.

And don't forget to find opportunities to surprise, delight and say thank you. With so many teams working remotely or on hybrid schedules, employees are looking to their employers for leadership, now more than ever.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy M. Litt is a Senior Strategist at FATFREE. She partners with FATFREE clients to identify points of entry within consumers' online and offline habits, then leads creative, media planning and development teams to drive conversion and long-term loyalty. Litt has deep experience in network building, public relations and content partnerships in addition to extensive digital, social and marketing disciplines.



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Anniversaries, Awards and Appointments

Members on the Move »



Natalie Brewer, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, a member of the Chattanooga Chapter, is now Office Administrator at Husch Blackwell LLP in Chattanooga, Tennessee.



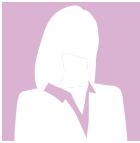
Amanda M. Garcia, a member of the New Mexico Chapter, is now Executive Director of Cuddy & McCarthy, LLP, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Angie Poulin, a member of the First State Chapter, is now Office Manager at Portnoff Law Associates, Ltd., in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania.



Anna Scarpa, a member of the New York City Chapter, is now Director of Human Resources at Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP in New York, New York



Kathleen Semeraro (not pictured), a member of the Nutmeg Chapter, is now Paralegal and Executive Assistant for Paul McConnell at McConnell Family Law Group in Hartford, Connecticut.



Lori L. Waldron, a member of the Wisconsin Chapter, is now Chief Operations Officer at N2 Advantage Law, Ltd., in Brookfield, Wisconsin.



Youlonda O. Wayne, a member of the Golden Gate Chapter, is now Office Administrator at Fox Rothschild LLP in San Francisco, California.

Sharing Our Condolences

ALA received word of the February passing of former member Jerry R. Sullenberger, 79. Jerry was a member for several years and once served as President of the Florida Capital (Tallahassee) Chapter. He worked as Director of Administration at Carlton Fields, PA, and more recently as a Practice Management Adviser at The Florida Bar. He also owned his own technology training and consulting company. Jerry, who served in the U.S. Army and was awarded the Purple Heart three times, will have a memorial service with military honors at Tallahassee National Cemetery. Donations in his memory can be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital or the Wounded Warrior Project. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and former colleagues.



ALA is saddened by the death of Paula Serratore, 71, who retired as Executive Director of the Capital Chapter last year. Although Paula was not a member of ALA herself, she was deeply connected to our organization and helped champion charitable causes and mentor women in management. Prior to this role, she was an executive at companies including Lucent and Motorola, where she served as Head of Global Marketing. Contributions in her memory can be made to the Scleroderma Foundation. Our thoughts are with her family, friends and past colleagues.

What's Happening at Headquarters

There's always a lot going on at ALA headquarters in Chicago. Here's a snapshot of what's in store for the coming weeks.



Worry-Free Registration Now Available for ALA's 2021 Annual Conference & Expo

Join us October 3–6 in Austin, Texas, for fresh, energizing educational content, speakers with varied perspectives and experiences for you to learn from and, of course, a 50th Anniversary to celebrate!

Much like ALA members, Austin is known for its welcoming and distinctive spirit. It's a unique city with a wide variety of attractions — there's something for everyone. Foodies, music lovers, history buffs, art aficionados, sightseers and nature enthusiasts alike will find something to explore and enjoy. The conference programming will offer professional development for every level of legal management, and plenty of opportunities to rekindle or establish lifelong connections within this amazing community. We will share updates on the agenda, venue details and accommodations soon.

Worry-free registration will make your decision to attend easier than ever. Please visit our FAQs for information on this policy and more. If you would like to register or have any immediate questions about the Annual Conference & Expo, visit ALAannualconf.org, contact us at info@alaannualconf.org or 1-888-593-7243.

Happy 50th Birthday, ALA! ALA officially turned 50 on March 4, the date we were incorporated in 1971. To mark the occasion, we've launched an interactive timeline that takes you through our history and released a video message from nearly all of ALA's Past Presidents. We'll be celebrating all year, culminating at in our Annual Conference & Expo, October 3–6 in Austin, Texas. In the meantime, be sure to follow along on our social channels with the #ALAI50 hashtag.



E-Learning Courses: Law Firm Management Essentials

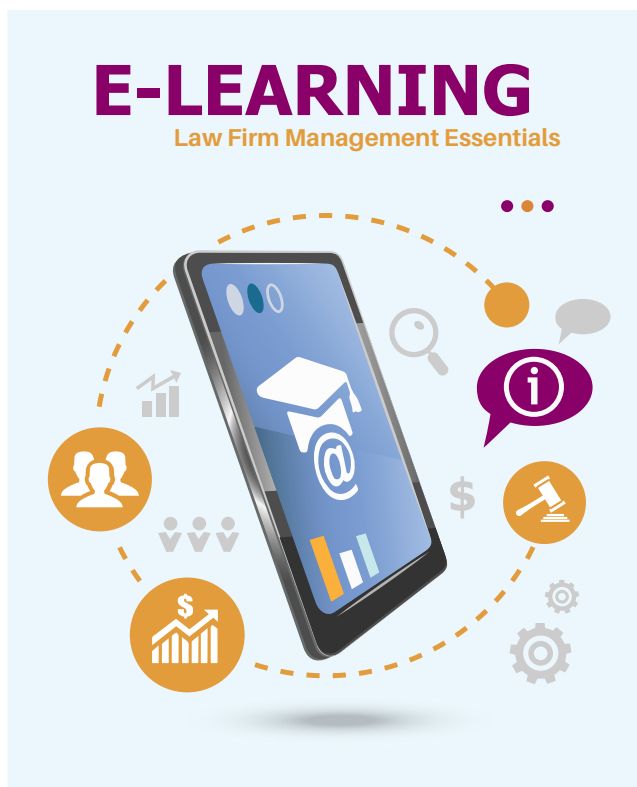
ALA's e-learning courses allow participants to direct their own education and learn at their own pace. They're perfect for the busy professional, as you can work your way through as many modules as you have time for and come back later to pick up where you left off.

And each digital module features a dynamic mix of text, graphics, animation, audio, video, quizzes, surveys and games to reinforce learning concepts.

Law firm management essentials (LFME), which used to be presented in conference form, has proven to be the perfect subject for this e-learning framework. Now, you can go online to refresh your memory about LFME or use the full package of courses as a professional development program for yourself or your staff:

- » Five-course LFME package
- » LFME: Operations Management
- » LFME: Financial Management
- » LFME: Human Resources
- » LFME: Legal Industry
- » LFME: Leadership

Visit alanet.org/elearning for more information.



Enter for Your 60 Seconds of Fame!

We're just over a month away from the April 15 deadline for *60 Seconds of Fame!* submissions. We encourage members and business partners to create 60-second videos that demonstrate how much they value their ALA relationship. We welcome everything from straightforward testimonials to parodies to skits to pop-culture references and anything in between. Learn more about the submission criteria at alanet.org/60-seconds.

Online voting takes place May 3–5, and the winner will be announced at the virtual ALA Annual Meeting on May 6.



Learn Law Firm Management Essentials Online

E-learning is self-directed and self-paced instruction that helps learners complete education and training objectives with greater ease and flexibility than traditional classroom or web courses.



-  **LFME: Operations Management**
-  **LFME: Financial Management**
-  **LFME: Legal Industry**
-  **LFME: Human Resources**
-  **LFME: Leadership**

Increase your skills and earn certificates of completion at alanet.org/elearning