Planning and implementing information systems in legal practice

Thomas Bassett

The problem

It's a practice-management policy nightmare:

You believe information technology can improve service delivery and profit. Everyone says they want those sexy new IT products; but how to decide how much to spend on what?

How do you reconcile the need for planning with the need to hit a moving target?

How can you achieve an effective design?

How will you implement your solution so that it works?

How do you know what sort of result to aim for?

Cultural issues

The IT solutions advanced to the commercial world at large are not necessarily workable in the culture of a professional partnership.

Three aspects of this culture stand out:

- Attitudes to technology
- Attitudes to capital investment
- Including non-lawyers in the firm

Two cultures?

In spite of all the intellect and logic thrown into the practice of law, many lawyers are a bit technophobic.

Professional legal practice, particularly for barristers and partners of firms, has about it a mythology of individual genius and freedom. Clients and fees attach to individuals, and form the basis for individual careers and reputations.

This encourages the attitude that individuals should not be subject to the mechanical disciplines that computers systems are supposed to import, and that essential values of the practice may be threatened by over-reliance on technology.

Certainly the law requires intellect and eloquence. Yet what a great judge or negotiator actually achieves is to span the inevitable gaps in a substrate of rather mechanical legal rules. It is with these rules that the majority of the working lawyer's time is spent. There's no point in getting too sentimental about that.

The law is like a computer program

There are two fundamental reasons why information technology is affecting the law so profoundly:

- the law is a form of information; and
- the law has an explicit structure that can be modelled programmatically.

Much of legal practice is therefore susceptible to automation.

Legislation and legal reasoning rely on often-complex chains of logic for their effect. They frequently work by categorising people, behaviour, and objects into hierarchical classes. Rules apply according to which class a thing belongs to, and what properties it may inherit from logically prior classes.

Computer programs work in just the same way.

Automating the rules-based substrate of the law will make simple legal services cheaper to deliver, and open wider markets.

By making commodities of correctness and thoroughness, information technology will sharpen the demand for intellect, eloquence and judgement in practitioners. It has the potential to make legal practice more satisfying and more valuable.

The initial antipathy to automation is based on misunderstanding. Lawyers and law firms are natural and happy users of information technology, provided the design and the training are right.

Some of the best evidence for this proposition is in the attitude of younger lawyers: to them the marriage seems natural, and necessary.

Partners should recognise they are capitalists

Probably the fundamental cultural issue in the automation of legal practice is the need for the owners of firms to begin to think and behave like capitalists;

- in terms of fixed investment;
- of return on fixed investment; and
- of exploitation of intellectual property

Embracing information technology means increasing the capital-intensivity of the practice. It means earning money not just from the application of time and skill, but also from the use of finance, plant and facilities.

This is at odds with exclusively time-based billing; it is also at odds with any reflex to remove all surplus by way of partners' distribution, since any investment is by definition a deferral of consumption.

Welcoming new people and new skills

Legal practice must automate, and to do so it must incorporate new skills.

As in other industries, automation is driven by the simple imperative of competition: now that it *can* be done, either *you* do it for your clients, or someone else will.

Automation of information processes tends to amplify the effectiveness of high-level skills while reducing the requirement for lower-level skills. It also requires new specialisations and tends to produce a more complex management environment.

Firms that want the benefits of information technology must learn to provide a congenial home for a cadre of non-legal professionals, providing them with training, management, and career paths.

These non-lawyers are the information specialists who will help turn legal knowledge into productive legal information systems.

The extent to which they are full-time staff on-premises, or part-time contractors will depend on the firm's size and business mix.

Over the next five years, every substantial legal practice will need skills in the following information-related areas, on some terms:

- Print design and production
- Editorial skills
- Multimedia production
- IT training design
- IT training project management
- User support
- Online legal research
- Database marketing
- Management reporting
- Communications engineering
- Network engineering
- Software design
- Knowledge engineering
- Interface design
- Software project management

Some of these will be required so often or on projects of such importance to the firm that they will have to be brought in-house.

To get the best from the people who carry these skills, they must be brought into the mainstream of the firm.

Outsourcing the other skills will create a series of important relationships that will demand sophisticated professional management.

The integration of these skills will not only improve the productivity of a firm's legal professionals; it will also extend the service range of the practice.

Innovation requires ideas and the ability to do new things. To be capable of innovation, firms must foster project management skills.

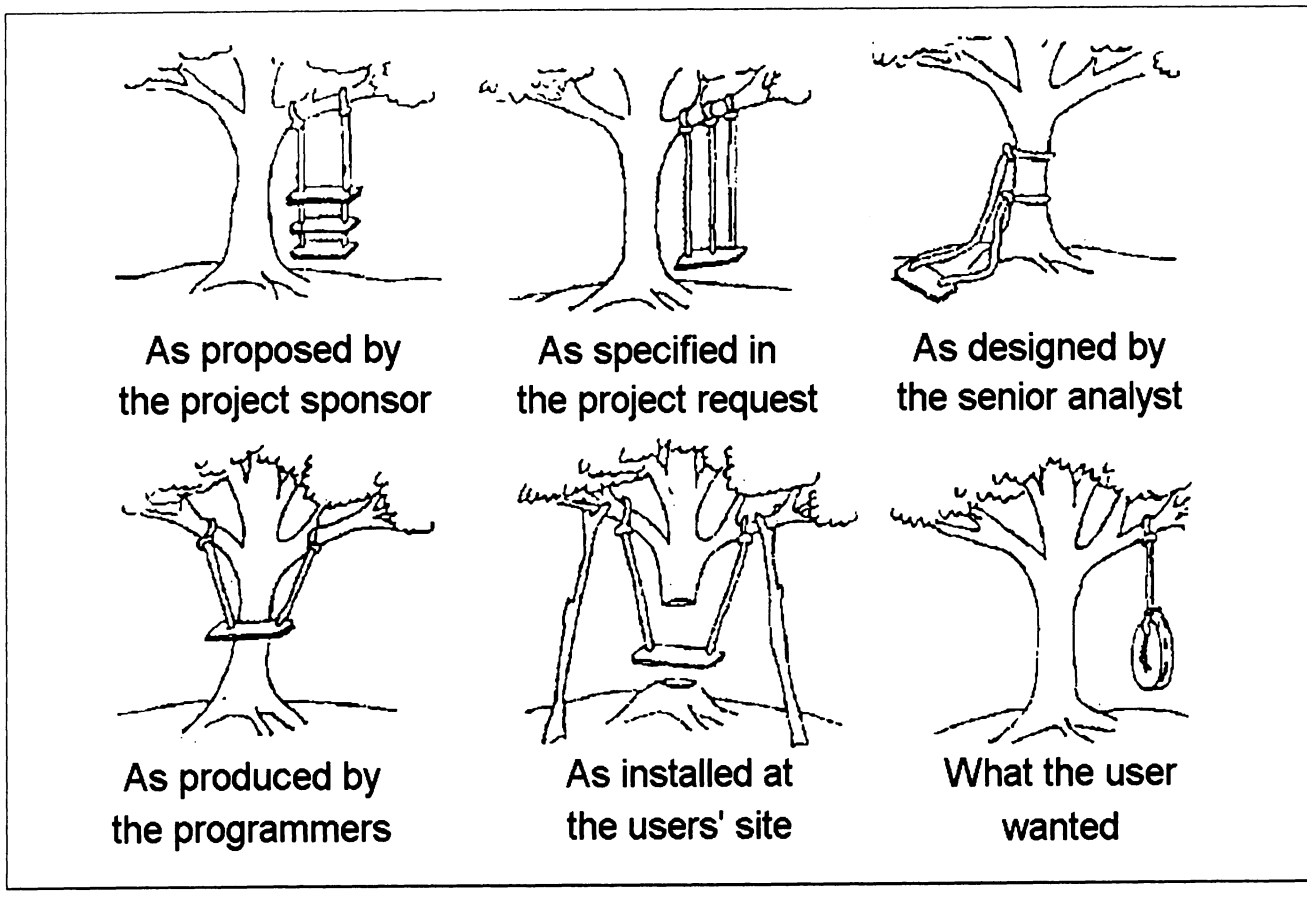
To be successful, an information project must take allow for the cultural context. This may mean taking special care with the cost justification and funding, making systems optional for some people, or addressing users' attitudes through training, and special care with the roles and management of non-legal professionals.

The business case and effective implementation

Why do IT projects fail?

Even if culture is given due regard, information projects will fail without clear goals and strong communications between the user, the builder, and the person paying the bills.

This cartoon has been passed around in IT circles for many years. It shows how the value in many information technology projects is destroyed by poor communications and



grandiosity. It demonstrates the importance of direct communications between users and developers.

Amid all the agony about software and hardware choices, firms often lose sight of the business reasons for the undertaking. And implementation often turns to blancmange or worse when logistics and human motivations are not respected.

It is easy to get overinvolved in the *what* of technology at the expense of the *why* and the *how* of it.

This tendency is exacerbated by the amount of arcane knowledge required to assess the technology on a technical level.

But there is nothing obscure about the common sense that needs to be applied at either end of the process of creating an information system.

These are the things most often overlooked and undercooked in information projects:

- the business case; and
- the mechanics of effective implementation.

A strong business case takes a lot of the politics out of funding and motivating a project; without one, a substantial project is not worth doing at all.

An effective implementation is one where the intended users of a system actually wind up using it, and it works for them and the firm. Many projects lose their way because not enough care is taken to get the new system and its users working together effectively.

The business case for planned information management

First, the business case.

A business case should set out unambiguous, observable benefits which the firm expects to gain from a project. It should also estimate the time and resources required. This allows partners to make a decision and a commitment based on a clear understanding of what they are buying into, and it allows them to check later that they got what they paid for.

It's not just projects that need a business case; a firm's whole information effort should be firmly justified in terms of its business goals.

Before addressing the business case in relation to specific projects, it is worthwhile to put information technology decisions in their proper context within the management of law firms.

Information strategy should be subordinate to business strategy

Unless a firm owns real estate, information technology is likely to account for the great majority of its fixed capital. It is fundamental to the firm's financial health that this capital be funded appropriately and invested productively, particularly in view of how fast it depreciates.

Information is pervasive and central to the economic and social functioning of a firm; it also represents a huge investment and a major asset. Information policy is too consequential to be made independent of a firm's strategic business plans.

To be of value, information strategy must realise the business goals and strategy of the practice. Practice strategy planning as a whole is beyond the scope of this paper; but some aspects of it are dealt with implicitly.

Planning information strategy

Given that a firm has a business strategy to guide its information strategy, what sort of deliverables should be expected from information strategy planning?

As "fixed" investments go, information technology is pretty transient. Rapid change means rapid obsolescence. This means that systems must earn their keep very quickly.

Funding should be of appropriately short duration and planning should explicitly include, and fund, the replacement of most current systems on a three- to five-year cycle.

Over this timescale, technologies will change unpredictably. Therefore the focus of the plan at the distant end should be on capabilities rather than specific technologies.

It is realistic to plan two years ahead at the level of individual projects, and in terms of required capabilities, four or five years out.

An essential output of the planning process is a capital budget that takes account of obsolescence and the expected growth of the firm.

The plan should explicitly address the requirement for financing, marketing, staffing and training and establish a timetable for decision-making in these areas.

We are assisting Gilbert & Tobin to develop a strategic information plan along these lines at present.

The implementation cycle

To be effective, planning should form part of a feedback loop: the implementation cycle.

Planning is the first step in implementation; but it also a response to the results of previous implementation that proceeds around this virtuous circle:

- Planning
- Budgeting
- Execution, and
- Evaluation

Please note the importance of evaluation: if a thing is not measured, it can't be managed.

The planning cycle should apply to individual projects, too: projects should be justified in terms of measurable business benefits. Then these benefits should actually be measured and the results used to evaluate the project and inform the planning of the next project.

To be effective, a plan cannot be static or isolated on a bookshelf. It requires a continuing high-level commitment. Firms should plan to plan, and plan to evaluate the outcomes of plans, and feed that back into the next cycle. This process should be for the benefit of the people who pay the bills; that is, the partners.

Changes in information technology present some of the greatest strategic challenges now facing law firms: it is transforming the way law gets done, and it is likely to transform the economics of legal practice within a decade. Firms' strategic planning should include an active response to this radical situation and the opportunities it brings.

Whether the strategy is to approach new markets, or reduce costs, or engage more closely with clients, or to offer new legal services or products, or simply to grow, a big part of the operational task entailed will be developing the necessary information management capability.

What is information management?

The scope of information management is all recorded information handled by the firm. This includes:

- The creation, storage and retrieval of documents in whatever form
- The accounting and financial reporting system
- The library
- Marketing information systems
- Newsgathering and dissemination
- Communications and data processing systems

Information management is concerned with these questions:

- What information does the practice require
- How is it acquired
- How is it categorised
- How is it stored
- How is value added to information
- How is it sold

This perspective does not address means, but ends. Explicitly, a measurable economic result or a capability to do something or deliver something.

The business case for an information project must identify the ends it is meant to achieve, and place the exercise in the context of the firm's business priorities.

The means may include training, communications, or paper procedures as well as computer hardware and software.

The increasing interdependence of computers, communications and other office equipment drives a tendency for IT planning to be techno-centric.

A technically coherent plan is necessary, but not sufficient, and it is not the best place to start.

Rather than planning its information technology, the firm should plan its information management.

The goal of information management is to provide the information capability the firm needs to meet its strategic business goals, to a timetable and to a budget.

A strategic information management plan documents the human, financial, organisational, and technological elements required to deliver this capability.

The business of information management

Profit per partner

The profit to an equity partner in a law firm now depends on just a few things: how much can the partner bill; how much can the fee-earners under that partner bill; and what does it cost to support them all?

Profit per partner can be increased by increasing fees, by increasing billable hours, by increasing the partner's leverage with more non-partner fee earners, or by reducing support costs.

Perhaps all these things are being done already.

IT can increase partners' leverage

Profit per partner can also be increased by making support more productive - instead of being just a cost, support staff using new information tools can extend the partner's fee-earning leverage.

More efficient internal management and communications systems may increase the number of lawyers a partner can effectively supervise by simultaneously providing more autonomy and easier monitoring.

Any return earned on invested financial capital increases partners' leverage without increasing the number of people they must manage, remunerate, train and promote.

Information technology can improve profit

Profit can be increased by offering new services billed by value, not time, so that revenues become less dependent on the limited number of available professional hours.

Profit can increase through using communications technology to form closer and more loyal relationships with clients.

Total Quality Management can reduce waste and improve reliability. Profit can be increased by closer management of business finance and overheads.

While these possibilities have existed forever, the present flowering of information technology allows them to be pursued much further and more cheaply than was possible before.

If information management were just a cost to be minimised, it could be minimised to zero. The proper perspective is that it is an opportunity to gain business benefits: profit from improved productivity, new products and improved levels of service.

How can information technology add value?

Now to cases.

How can information technology add value? In these three ways:

- More effective client contact
- Improving the productivity of fee-earners
- Producing value-based billables

More effective contact with clients

Information technology can help law firms deliver their services:

Tracking client contact
Databases and workflow systems can function as a firm's memory; they make consistent follow-up much easier to achieve and monitor, and they can serve up lists of contacts based on what is already known about them: their industry, their matter history, their reading preferences.

The first stage of the Gilbert & Tobin contact database is now in pilot testing. This groupware application uses Lotus Notes to allow partners and lawyers to share a central database.

Stage two, which is now in development, adds a mailroom back-end that will allow lawyers at their desks to initiate a mailout to groups of contacts. Addressees may be selected by area of law, industry, or by ad hoc criteria. Designated support staff receive by email:

- a daily instruction sheet
- circulars and publications
- mail merge files
- address label files

This application will allow more focus and consistency, and reduces the effort required to send accurate mail communications.

Having clients on-line is good for business
An email or intranet connection with a client can change the nature of the relationship. Instead of being separated by telephones, appointment books and secretaries, the firm can be present on the client's desktop.

With a secure intranet connection individual clients can be given access to selected precedent libraries, work-in-progress reports and interactive services. Within a few months satisfactory Internet security standards will allow this to be offered through a Web site as well.

The marginal cost to a firm of giving this access is slight, but the benefits in terms of

differentiation from other firms, and client satisfaction and loyalty are considerable.

However, as with any innovation, only early adopters really profit. Given enough time these advances will become the norm: just another compulsory commoditised cost.

When clients are given an email connection, some interesting things start to happen. Clients become more ready to circulate their internal communications, and the firm can begin do the same. Lawyers get forewarning of clients' needs and problems as they develop, and can offer better, more timely service, becoming virtual members of the client's organisation. Clients can get something they want very much: an up-to-the-minute understanding of the progress of their matters, and access to the archived output of previous engagements.

Online is a good place to present legal services
An online presence is a good advertisement that a firm is familiar and capable in the new medium, and it is a good way to communicate with existing and potential clients.

Gilbert & Tobin recently made the move onto the Web, at **http://www.gtlaw.com.au**.

Their site projects the firm into cyberspace and forms part of the firm's public persona. The site tells a bit about the firm's history and values; but these really only make up the preface. No-one goes to a website to be sold; they go to find out useful information.

The partnership decided to put industrial-strength research and opinion on their website, rather than the well-digested newsletters that are rather common. The reason is obvious - the firm wants to expose its expertise, and be of service to the sort of people who value that expertise. A website must give something to get anything back. It's not the quantity of people on the site that counts so much as the quality of their experience there.

The site contains an email exchange for every fee-earner, providing a simple way for clients and prospective clients to contact individual lawyers and partners of the firm. There are also professional profiles of the lawyers.

The firm's services are identified graphically and linked to the profile of the partner responsible, and directly to the partner, via email.

This represents an early step in a new interactive medium; as much as anything, the reason for doing it now is to begin to develop the editorial, managerial and back-office capabilities that will be needed in a year or two to provide online services.

A website is much cheaper than a real office, and yet it can represent a firm all over the world. In five years it will be commonplace to double click a lawyer's place of business in cyberspace and establish a video-quality connection with a virtual receptionist who can direct the visitor either to programmed services or to a videoconference with a live advisor.

Improving the efficiency of time-based service

The second area where Information technology can add value is in improved productivity.

Improved document delivery
The primary deliverable output of the firm is documents. The efficiency of the system that generates the documents is a primary determinant of earning capacity.

Simple email allows drafts to be exchanged without retyping. Application-sharing software allows two or more people to share a view of a single document and work on it together.

Automated document processing, storage and retrieval provides faster response to clients and frees support staff to make a more intelligent contribution to the firm's business, as well as helping contain their numbers

At the high end, a comprehensive document management system gives users the ability to query all kinds of documents in the same search procedure, and creates a place in the system that knows the whereabouts of everything else in the system.

Better use of precedents

Law firms are producers and dealers in the information marketplace. It follows that copyright is an important asset, and skills and systems for exploiting copyright are likely to be a good source of added value. This is another source of value which is capital in nature and not intrinsically dependant on limited available professional hours, and so can increase partners' leverage.

An effective precedent system enables a firm to capture all useful past work for reuse. This work has already been done; the marginal cost of reuse lies only in retrieval and adaption.

Gilbert & Tobin is building an online precedent system using a document database. The key idea is that there is a series of concentric sets of documents offering increasing degrees of refinement, authority, and automation. Any lawyer will be able to add new material to the outermost level of the database without seeking approval;

Workflow software mediates a document's progress to the inner circle, during which it acquires classification, commentaries, partner approval and some programming to make it faster to use. This approach is designed to remove any bureaucratic obstacles to capturing the widest set of material without losing the firm's ability to distinguish what is tried and tested.

Better use of support staff

Document imaging and OCR can already remove much of the routine work of copy typing. Speech-recognition systems are beginning to take the typing out of dictation. None of this needs to make wordprocessor operators redundant. What it will do is provide them with the opportunity to use their foundation of legal and computing skills to move into higher value-added work in document creation, training, and systems maintenance.

At Gilbert & Tobin, two support staff have undergone substantial training and recently completed the transition to new roles as PC training officers. This work began with their participation in designing and testing new word-processing systems.

Better access to research

The library has grown to include the Internet; presentation is increasingly mediated electronically, whether by word processor, email or overhead; IT can support the application of legal skills, by delivering a filtered subset of this new great library more quickly than can be done by hand, and a good deal more thoroughly, by providing speedy and polished presentation.

Value-based billables

The third area where information technology can add value is through the production of value-based billables - legal products whose worth does not depend directly on how much of a fee-earner's time was spent delivering them.

To the extent that legal products and services are mediated electronically, they are potentially independent from hourly costs and hourly billing.

That is, a legal practice can escape a little from the strict proportionalities imposed by the number of billable hours in the day and begin to share a little in the economies of scale of an industrial operation, or even better, in the diminishing marginal cost structure and wide market access of a publisher.

Automatic legal documents

An advanced type of precedent system could be operated directly by a client. Documents could be generated in a client's own office in response to a structured online questionnaire. With appropriate caveats, this approach might even give individual clients affordable access to legal documents such as wills. If technology such as this can deliver a reliable document more cheaply than existing methods, it will be used instead. Will law firms be the ones to deliver it?

Searching and filing

Online searches are becoming commonplace. They are typically charged for per item, that is, independent of the operator's time.

As more databases come online and search software improves, the potential exists for firms to establish unit billing rates for many of these essentially automatic processes.

Online document filing offers similar efficiencies.

Real time compliance systems

The trend toward flattening organisations and giving greater autonomy to lower-level employees has greatly increased the number of people whose daily responsibilities put them in a position to act illegally on behalf of their employers.

At the same time, concern about corporate responsibility and quality have led to a demand for higher standards of conduct.

There is a demand for systems that deliver compliance with the law by large numbers of dispersed employees, more cheaply than by encouraging them all to call a lawyer whenever they have a question.

This demand can be met with training programs backed by interactive materials that provide answers under all normal contingencies, and otherwise prompt the user to escalate the enquiry.

A program that trains or reminds a client's employees of the law can give advice at nil marginal cost.

It can be sold once on a high-bandwidth CD, or it can be provided as an on-line subscription service.

To get the best of both worlds, a firm could use a CD programmed as an interactive library of images and text which requires an on-line connection to keep it up-to date.

Such a service can work for clients twenty-four hours per day.

News on demand: the advice system

It has become possible for an organisation to know the news, wherever it happens, whenever it happens, as soon as it happens.

Knowing the news, and especially knowing it first, can impart commercial advantage.

It follows that it is becoming a *commercial necessity* to know the news, or at least the relevant news, very quickly.

News per se is cheap and abundant.

Commercially useful news is rare and precious.

The value-add comes in two steps. The first is filtering by subject, which can be handled automatically, and is becoming a commodity. The second is recognising what is important within a subject area and adding commentary about why. This requires specialist knowledge and can therefore command a significant margin.

By virtue of their privileged knowledge of a client's affairs, a law firm is in a position to know with considerable precision which aspects of the news are important to which clients and why.

For years, law firms have been giving away newsletters as a promotion.

Once these newsletters go online, as they are beginning to, it becomes feasible to tailor them to individual clients, thus greatly increasing their worth.

Email and Printing

Today law firms employ logging and billing software for photocopies, fax and phone calls. Before long, firms will need logging and billing systems for their replacements: email, imaging and laser printing.

Implementing information technology

This paper has looked at several ways that information technology can add value - through improved service delivery, document production, and value-based services. It is important that information projects be clearly directed at measurable goals and that there is a firm decision to proceed based on realistic logistics.

There is a lot more to implementing a piece of software than programming, though, and having even the clearest goals will not help to attain them without pragmatic implementation.

Process

Effective systems do something useful and people actually use them. To ensure this, users should be closely involved in the design and testing of systems, and subsystems should be produced quickly so that they arrive in time to meet changing needs.

Given planning that emphasises ends, firms can be opportunistic in selecting technical means as they roll out of the lab from time to time.

The incremental approach to things digital is wisest and cheapest. It is better to get part of a working result, then another part, than to wait too long for the whole thing.

Keeping projects relevant to the business needs of the firm and keeping them adequately resourced also requires the active involvement of senior partners. Each significant project should be led and sponsored by a partner, who has overall responsibility for budget and outcomes. Design should be a cooperative process between lawyers and developers. Designers are needed who can see problems from a lawyer's perspective.

There needs to be a high degree of personal communication between the people who build information systems and the people who use them and the information they generate.

Team meetings ensure that projects continue to meet developing user needs throughout the implementation cycle.

As well as technical staff and contractors, each project team should include a pilot group of lawyers and support staff who help design the system, test it, evaluate it and recommend changes.

The pilot group also designs and evaluates training courses and help documentation. When an application is rolled out fully, members of the pilot group are well-placed to explain, train and support the application to the firm as a whole.

Development proceeds by iteration of the cycle, with versions being released as soon as they are signed off by the pilot group and the sponsor.

Systems staff have one-to-one relationships with users which ensures effective communication and useful outcomes.

During the roll-out of Gilbert & Tobin's new word-processing system temporary support staff were hired to ease the keyboard load on secretaries and WPOs while they got up to speed on the new system. Simultaneously a dedicated trainer was assigned to give one-on-one help.

The process was monitored continuously via formally organised feedback from staff. As a result a second iteration of the macros and template documents was ready only four weeks after the first version was delivered. The consequence was that the users of the system identified it as their own, and the criticisms that usually attend a new system were redirected into improving it before they could produce a sense of grievance.

Motivation and change

Marshalling the troops

Staff participation is essential for successful information projects. Staff participation needs to be motivated. Often the staff in question are busy fee-earners.

Lawyers will often be needed to spend significant unbilled time on information projects:

Where lawyers are the final users of the information produced by a new system, it is cost-effective for them to be closely involved in the specification, design and testing of the system.

Often only lawyers have the specific knowledge of the firm and its clients needed to provide the initial data for an application.

Training or compliance products manifest detailed legal expertise and must perforce be prepared by lawyers, working closely with others.

Fee-earners must spend time on IT. They must help design the systems. They have the data, they need the output. Technicians can only build the

systems.

There are two issue raised by this:

- motivating staff participation and
- controlling its cost.

Motivating participation
The formal and informal incentives and rewards offered by the firm must reflect new priorities.

There is a great difference between producing an acceptable number of seminar papers in the course of a year and say, editing an online newsletter. While both tasks must be done by lawyers, editing a newsletter is a line responsibility that cannot be put aside for a month if the caseload gets too great. It involves responsibility for other people's performance and deadlines, and it has dimensions of client relations and professional responsibility.

If a lawyer is an essential member of the team producing a training program or a new compliance product, then part of their time must be dedicated to the project.

Firms must find a way to recognise and reward time spent on these projects on the same dollar and promotion scale that they recognise and reward hours worked directly for clients.

This requires accounting systems that recognise and measure the costs and benefits of these activities.

It probably means more pervasive time recording, of the non-billable time of fee-earners, and of the increasingly valuable time of support staff.

It requires partners to rewards this participation.

Reporting and control
If practices are to stay profitable while they automate, they will need a way to account for project costs and value-billed services, and ways to attribute costs and revenues to physical and intellectual capital.

This may include explicit costing of non-billable time spent by fee-earners, and ways to aggregate these costs with plant costs and the time of non-fee-earners, to arrive at meaningful total project costs.

This sort of measurement and reporting is necessary if partners are to remain in control of their increasingly complex organisations.

If someone can monopolise a staff programmer for a week, they may have spent $2000 of the firm's cash. Do the partners know about it, did they approve it?

With budgeting, costing and reporting systems in place, firms can allow an internal marketplace to develop for IT services, which encourages innovation and aids efficiency, and yet maintains control in the hands of the partners.

A new role for support staff
One of the darker concerns for legal staff facing automation is the redundancy of their skills.

Each lawyer has a different preferred degree of engagement with technology; some really want to roll around in it; others would rather it went away.

While direct use of IT by fee-earners is generally beneficial, the heart of a lawyer's competency is fairly independent of technology, and firms can afford to be tolerant of varying degrees of involvement.

To the extent that IT is used by a firm, and to the extent that individual lawyers eschew it, support staff must become the information technology maestros.

One of the potential benefits of information technology is to empower support staff by giving them a career path to higher-skilled and more productive roles in the firm.

Most of the new roles that are emerging require an understanding of the operation of a legal practice and of lawyers; only a minority of them are 'hard' IT roles. Some of the best qualified people to take on these roles already work for law firms; they are the same secretaries and wordprocessor operators who might seem in danger of becoming redundant as a result of new technology.

The mail room can become a publishing house, the IT department can become trainers and project deliverers to the whole firm, the library can become a gateway to any document whatsoever, wordprocessor operators become presentation creators, and secretaries, personal legal assistants.

Handled with imagination, the process of recreating a law firm as an information management organisation can be a winner for all staff.

Conclusion

Good, imaginative information management is critical to the commercial health of a legal practice. It is also an expensive, moving target.

Planning is essential for cultural and financial preparedness.

Technology per se can be a distraction. It is better to focus on the capabilities a firm needs to compete, and upon pragmatic implementation.

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