

# Good management

Alongside the preparation of Precedent H as one aspect of costs budgeting, changes to the costs management regime have meant that new skills are now required, as Antony Smith and Sue Nash explain

Of equal importance to the production of Precedent H are the monitoring and controlling of costs budgets during the lifetime of a matter; managing budgets as projects; and project management skills.

His Honour Judge Simon Brown QC recently wrote in the *New Law Journal*: "Budgeting is just one facet of the skill of legal project management (LPM) that all civil litigation lawyers now need to have... CPD LPM training needs to be mandatory for those conducting multi-track civil litigation."

## Legal project management

LPM refers to project management methods and techniques that can be best adapted for legal industry needs, when developing and promoting a project-based mindset while delivering legal services.

There is no single detailed LPM scheme that fits each and every legal services organisation, however some core project management principles and methods can be applied in order to increase the likelihood of completing matters within initial estimated costs and delivering value to the client.

## Challenges and opportunities

One immediate challenge for costs lawyers is to understand better how law firms are trying to manage litigation in light of the costs budgeting regime and other commercial pressures that they are faced with.

Practically every law firm seems to have been engaged in some form of process improvement initiative recently, aiming to reduce or eliminate 'waste'. Costs lawyers need to understand how these process improvement projects typically work, what law firms look to achieve from them and, most importantly, the position that costs lawyers are now most commonly perceived to occupy in the 'value chain'.

It follows on from this that costs lawyers – like anyone else involved in the delivery chain – need to be able to demonstrate that they can clearly add value. How might this be achieved?

One route might be through helping with the project management of litigation, for example by supplementing solicitors' project management skills with the costs-based skills of costs lawyers.

Arguably, as bare essentials, costs lawyers need to acquire greater understanding of project-based techniques for:

- scoping and estimating matters;
- managing cases as ongoing projects;
- communicating project progress clearly with all concerned;
- being part of effective litigation teams; and
- leading litigation teams (where appropriate).

## Legal project management training

Costs lawyers (and, indeed, barristers and solicitors) have very limited exposure to formal project management methods and techniques during their training. There is, however, an obvious benefit to be gained by doing so after qualification, and for members to supplement their innate legal management practice experience by acquiring project management

skills and then learning to apply them.

The ACL believes this is something that needs to be rectified, thus we are investigating the idea of offering legal project management training to costs lawyers. As a starting point, we plan to offer a half-day 'taster' session some time early in the first quarter of 2014.

The primary purpose of the session will be to update costs lawyers about process improvement initiatives within law firms and provide an introduction to legal project management. The secondary purpose will be to gather feedback from attendees about how legal costs project management training may be refined and developed further. ■

If you are interested in attending this half-day session, please contact Diane Pattenden at [enquiries@costslawyer.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@costslawyer.co.uk)

*Sue Nash is ACL Committee chair for media/PR and an ACL Council member, and Antony Smith is director of Legal Project Management Ltd [www.legalprojectmanagement.co.uk](http://www.legalprojectmanagement.co.uk)*

