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# **Increase Lawyer Productivity by Cutting out the Waste**

By Laura Mooney, Vice President, Metastorm

The success of law firms relies on a steady flow of billable revenue – much of which is driven by individual lawyers servicing customers. However, lawyers are often burdened by administrative tasks and inefficient processes that limit the time they can actually spend on billable client work. They are also facing high regulatory pressures and the need to provide an enhanced client service. So if given the opportunity to cut out some of this waste and focus more time on generating revenue, would you jump on it? Many law firms are doing just that– doing more with less as is so critical in today's difficult economic times.

Law firms such as Allen & Overy, DLA, Duane Morris, Eversheds, Foley & Lardner, Freshfields, Hogan & Hartson, and Jones Day have seen the benefits of adopting business process management (BPM) – using the latest in BPM software technology to eliminate paper forms, reduce lawyer overhead, and automate processes, while improving the range and quality of client services and ensuring regulatory compliance.

BPM software allows you to model, automate, integrate, analyse, simulate, and improve human and system-intense processes. BPM differs from the workflow capabilities in your existing records management and case management systems because it is architected to allow modelling and automation of unique processes and delivers the flexibility to make real-time process changes to many different processes across your organisation. In fact, BPM software actually integrates with your existing document and case management systems and makes them more valuable. For example BPM allows you to utilise data and records across multiple processes, ensures that records management and case management systems are updated immediately, and enables multiple people to collaborate on cases simultaneously. All actions taken in the process along with the associated content are logged for auditing, and process statistics and data can be analysed and displayed in a graphical format for presentations and reports. The increased visibility that BPM provides into what is happening across critical business processes can be leveraged to model changes and apply improvements to the process.

As any business trend grows in popularity, there emerge both advocates and sceptics, and the BPM trend is no exception. However even the sceptics need to take notice that more and more law firms are proving that BPM software not only solves critical process problems, but also delivers a fast return on investment and helps them get more out of the assets they already have – including their lawyers. So how can BPM help firms address the challenges of increasing productivity and revenues, handling regulatory pressures and enhancing customer service?

### **Increased productivity and revenue opportunities**

The new client matter intake process is usually the first critical process that most firms tackle, as reviewing and processing new business is one of the most important but challenging and time-consuming activities within a law firm. A variety of manual procedures and paperwork are required to check for potential conflicts of interest, validate the business value of the matter, establish credit worthiness of the client, gather marketing data for cross-selling, and ensure that the firm's accounting systems are updated with the information required to generate accurate monthly billing statements. Using a BPM solution to automate new business intake enables firms to dramatically reduce the time required to move a new matter from the initial request to a billable client matter. By applying BPM to new business intake and conflicts management processes, firms can quickly achieve measurable results in many areas. These include faster intake of new clients and matters, elimination of duplicate data entry errors and omissions, reduced administrative overhead, process compliance across global operations, and centralised reuse of existing data, systems and technologies through seamless integration. Creating greater efficiency in this process frees up lawyer time for billable work while at the same time lowering the risk to the firm by ensuring a thorough review and capturing an online audit trail.

### **Regulatory pressures**

Firms are finding that they can leverage BPM software to achieve regulatory compliance and lower risk, and ultimately save hundreds of thousands of pounds on annual liability insurance premiums. BPM automates human-centric processes so it ensures repeatability and consistency in processes and enforces business rules and levels of authority in all actions. Every action taken in a process is captured into an online audit trail that can be viewed, analysed and used in an audit situation, helping to maintain regulatory compliance.

### **Enhanced customer service**

BPM technology helps law firms achieve competitive advantage by increasing efficiency and reducing costs while at the same time being able to provide an enhanced client service that is so critical to success.

An example is given by one of the leading US legal firms, Duane Morris, which adopted BPM to help them manage their new business intake process in an auditable environment for enhanced productivity and collaboration across the firm. This has allowed the firm to free valuable employees' time from administrative, paper-based tasks who can now focus on their clients and higher-value activities.

Similarly, a global legal firm, Linklaters, introduced BPM and this has resulted in a big improvement in response times to clients giving them an edge over competitors.

McKenna Long & Aldridge, an international legal firm that prides itself in a personalised client service, has used BPM technology to automate procedures for new client matter intake. Since the implementation, the firm processes new client matters 40-50% faster, offering better client service, and driving repeat business and references.

### **Maximising the investment**

Because BPM software is such an agile technology, it can be easily applied to many areas and projects throughout the business: anti-money laundering precautions, audit letter response, collections, accounts receivable write-off, file closing, prospective search records management, travel and expense, and check requisition. This is certainly an important advantage to take into consideration when making a business case, showing you can indeed do more with less.

### **About the author**

Laura Mooney is vice president of corporate communications for Metastorm – a global leader in enterprise architecture, business process analysis, and business process management software. She is responsible for worldwide corporate communications and leads all efforts related to corporate positioning, creative messaging, brand development, social media strategy, public relations and industry analyst programs. Laura has over 18 years of experience in the technology marketing field. She has held corporate and product marketing leadership positions with companies such as Manugistics, OutReach Technologies and IBM, in addition to starting and running her own marketing consulting firm. She is a frequent speaker at industry events and has published numerous articles, podcasts, and eBooks.