

# Navigating Legal Excellence: Insights in Legal Operations & Project Management

## Mastering the future of legal services through Lean Six Sigma

The Digital Age is undoubtedly reshaping how legal professionals need to operate. PwC's recent Law Firm Survey reports that within two years, 83% of Top 100 Firms in the UK intend to move 'work allocation' to a more tech-based, automated solution.

This will be impacting business models, resourcing, and value pricing. To remain relevant and compete with tech savvy rivals like ASLPs, the Big 4 and platform firms, law firms must embrace innovation and implement workflow efficiencies that reduce costs and enhance service delivery. This is often challenging given limited capacity and ability to define, implement and measure the changes necessary. Adopting the Lean Six Sigma [LSS] methodology can be pivotal in helping to focus on what constitutes as 'wastage' within processes or habitual ways of working and how to remove these effectively.

LSS has powered global corporate giants like Amazon, McDonald's, 3M, and Nike to success. The legal sector has, however, been slow to jump on this process improvement train. Despite recognizing the need for change, according to PwC, a mere 24% of law firms are actively revamping their organisational initiatives. This presents an untapped opportunity for firms to enhance operations, and propel productivity, delivery, and ideas in a meaningful way.

By utilising the LSS model, you can clearly **Define**, accurately **Measure**, logically **Analyse**, tangibly **Improve** and **Control** (DMAIC) the impact on workflows and processes you need. The DMAIC framework provides a clear process that can improve daily efficiencies, which can have a compounding and lasting effect on time, costs, client, and value, making LSS an invaluable skill and approach.

## Define

### Identify and set goals

By way of an example, common issues in law firms or practices are caused by inefficient document management systems (DMS). Within the Define stage, you start by identifying document management challenges specific to your firm or department. For instance, the problem in your practice group may be delayed document approval. Now, define your clear objectives connected to your issue. In this case it would be accelerated document approval. By simply defining your goals in this way, you ensure a targeted approach to solving inefficiencies. This will benefit your firm or practice as it will enable focused resource allocation, measurable outcomes, and efficient workflow design. Well-defined goals prevent misdirection of efforts and wasting resources. Starting off any improvement initiative using this Definition framework ensures streamlined processes, allowing for a concrete and impactful approach to legal tasks that will boost productivity and satisfaction in the workplace.

## Measure

### Quantify progress

In the Measure stage, it is about turning your defined objectives into tangible outcomes. With your objective of accelerated document approval defined, it is time to gather insights utilising data analytics. Quantifying metrics such as document retrieval time, approval time and error rates will pinpoint inefficiencies within approval processes. Such visibility of metrics enables strategic resource allocation. This ensures informed decision-making for accelerated document approval is set in motion. Quantification will further help identify areas where tech tools or automation could be applied. This data-driven approach will show clients you can back up your efficiency with numbers, enhancing your credibility and reputation within the field as a modern law firm who embraces tech and innovation.

## Analyse

### Blueprint for efficiency

Goals have been set in the Define stage and successes quantified in the Measure stage. The Analyse stage is about taking the defined goals and measured success and transforming them into a blueprint for concrete success. It is about reshaping and refining. For example, through meticulous scrutiny of approval processes, bottlenecks are identified. In turn, you can build a model, backed up by data from the Measure stage, that will help streamline and improve document approval workflows. Analysis might unveil further opportunities to use tech tools that can help speed up the process and reduce errors. This will solidify your reputation as leader in risk management and instil confidence in client advice as accelerated approval timelines benefit lawyers by allowing more time for strategic, impactful legal work, enhancing overall productivity.

## Improve

### Tangible transformation

The Improvement stage is about making your proposed transformation tangible. In other words, it is time to carry out the steps in the model you created during the Analyse stage. For instance, by utilising tech tools to automate the approval processes and cutting down the manual errors and delays identified in the Measure phase, you directly address the analysed bottlenecks. These improvements help to not only streamline but redefine your firm's document management framework. This will solidify your reputation and offer practical benefits such as enhanced precision and a legal practice positioned at the forefront of document management innovation, allowing you to leverage your competitive advantage.

## Control

### Ensure integrated efficiency into workflows

After fine-tuning automated approval processes in Improve, the Control stage will ensure your practice stays efficient and error-free. For instance, in the Improve stage you have implemented an automated approval system to streamline document processes, cutting down manual errors. Now, in the Control stage, you could establish regular audits to ensure these systems remain efficient. These control measures will catch potential issues before they become problems that could negatively affect your clients and ensure smooth operation of the DMS. It will benefit you as it lessens risk of errors and delays and ensures clients see you as a reliable firm/practice to work with. Having reached the final stage, your client will see that you have paved a roadmap for legal excellence, where each stage builds upon the last and provides concrete benefits like reduced risk and sustained efficiency. On a larger scale, implementing LSS will help position your firm or practice as a leader in innovation and process improvement, allowing you to boost your reputation and attract clients who are increasingly valuing these traits in law firms.

## Overcoming barriers of implementation

To successfully implement LSS in a law firm, it is crucial to address specific barriers. More than a process, this way of working, is a mindset. By introducing LSS principles you shift manager and employee mindsets to growth, continuous improvement and a culture that encourages engagement and maximising the best of their time. We have listed a few steps that are necessary to effectively encourage the LSS principles of continuous improvement in law firms:

**Cultural shifts:** Engage with or set up Champions networks, who can foster greater departmental integration, champion improvement initiatives, advocate key messages for processes, change and engagement.

**Comprehensive training:** Engage with your firm's business and legal operations professionals who can offer continuous support on implementing LSS principles, as well as assist on further commercial needs.

**Open communication:** Organise monthly townhalls, briefs or newsletters to foster a culture of open communication, to boost visibility and ensure people are aware and engaged. It is important they also have a forum for questions and address concerns.

**Realistic expectations:** Set practical and achievable goals. Understanding 'how' you will deliver and continually monitor progress will ensure sustainable improvements with long lasting effects.

In today's high-stakes legal arena, where efficiency and quality are paramount, LSS emerges as the proven path to success. By committing to incremental adoption of LSS principles, the legal sector can embark on a journey of streamlined operations, eliminating inefficient processes and optimising resource utilisation. The result? A legal practice that stands out amongst its competitors as an institution of value. Adopting LSS is more than an option; it's a strategic imperative for law firms and legal departments aiming to seize the future of legal services, where LSS principles are the game-changers that redefine client satisfaction, ultimately cementing your reputation as a legal industry leader.

### Get in touch

The Legal Operations and Project Management team has the specialised skillset to create and implement tailored solutions which help in mitigating many of the communication issues that commonly arise in legal projects. Engaging with the Legal Operations and Project Management Team as early as possible helps ensure a smooth service delivery, streamlined process and positive relationships with both clients and project stakeholders.

### Key contacts



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