



## How is the Legal Services Act Connected to Law Firm Cost Containment?

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I've been going through a massive attack of writer's block lately. It's been a few weeks and it's really wearing on me now. I was thinking it was because I just didn't know what I wanted to say. But as time has passed, I also realize it's because I don't know what you want to hear.

Are you really interested in learning about the UK's Legal Services Act (LSA) (aka Tesco Law) when all you're doing is praying the phone will ring? Or trying to find the right person to delegate tasks to? Or figuring out how to use this cloud system you downloaded because "they" said you need to do the virtual thing?

Or is it that I'm interested in the LSA, so that's what I'm going to write about, never mind that you don't find it useful.

Great marketing skills, here. Great blogging attitude. Way to win hearts and minds.

So I asked myself: "Why do I think it's so important for lawyers to know about the LSA and it's aftermath?" And the answer is because it's really clear that the practice of law is being upended, and so far the US has seen only the first few cracks. It will effect your practice in ways you won't see coming unless you know what's going on.

But that doesn't mean much if you're either not able to pay the bills, or trying to understand how the practice law the "Starbucks" way (no advocacy of using open wifi intended).

So let's just say your position is: I understand this is important, but I don't know what exactly to do to respond. How should I change? Where do I start? Assuming the upending is taking hold, these are some fundamental building blocks on which to structure your firm's practice.

- Remember you are a **business owner**. Your practice needs to be tended like a business, not some semi-collegiate institution where finding some arcane legal theory is cause for an open-bar celebration at 5 pm. Legal theory is interesting, and by all means use what you need, but no more. Your clients won't pay for it.
- Think **cost containment**. Pure and simple. Before you make a decision about anything to do with how you practice, the first question you must ask yourself is: is incorporating this method the least costly way I can accomplish my goal? And I'm not talking about buying the cheapest laptop or the lowest service level of an application. Containing costs takes planning. It takes reviewing the last year's worth of monthly expenses to track where the money is going, and what can be cut out to bring it within your income and profit goals for that period of time.

- Closely tied to cost containment is **efficiency**. Where is your time being wasted? How can you eliminate that? Conduct a similar review of your staff's time. Analyze how work flows through your office: is there a system by which a client's matter moves through the legal processes it requires in an orderly fashion? Are there ways in which each person who handles the file (lawyer or staff) can quickly access the information about the matter so they can do their part? If not, efficiently create these systems by using:
- **Technology**. There are dozens of cloud applications designed specifically for lawyers that streamline your workflow once the necessary information is input. I'm talking about practice management, case management, time/billing, scheduling, collaboration and any other number tools that house all of your information, documents, communications securely so you don't have to. What about desktop programs? They're out there, of course, but all the IT developer talent is going to the cloud. Businesses are adopting cloud applications over desktop in huge numbers. And you know why? Because they're **cost effective**. Technology can also provide you with **legal project management** software that will give you a structure in which you can create an efficiency model to keep you on track. **Mind-mapping** technology helps you create your legal strategy, and keeps you from needing to rethink it over and over. It also provides the comfort that, if something is found that requires a change of strategy, you can go back and throw it into the original thought process to see how that affects your course of action.

These are some of the basic concepts you must consider when preparing your firm to succeed in the very near future. It takes some getting used to. But once you integrate these concepts into your thinking and planning, you will begin to see their usefulness in many different ways, not the least of which to keep your mind empty of business issues when it should be. And, of course, the peace of mind in knowing that you're doing everything you need to do to not fall prey to the LSA.

Oh, and by the way, if you do want to know more about the LSA, I'd be thrilled to write about it!