

## Trip to Skye

By the time you read this I will have completed a road trip to Skye having strategically decided that a break would be nice with a secondary objective of seeing the northern lights.

I then will have planned the team of people that would be making this happen and identified a date with milestones – overnight at Loch Lomond on the way up and again on the way back – two nights in Portree. I then utilised the Sat Nav to sort the route but also real time traffic updates (KPIs) to enable me to make changes to the journey in the most effective way.

It's just like taking our law firm forward – knowing the starting point, knowing where you want to be, defining how you are going to get there with milestones reports and KPIs to help you keep on track or advise you early enough that changes are needed.

## Key Aspects of Managing our Law Firm Successfully

I would now like to give credit to all of the speakers at the MLS Management Conference at the end of September as we have had numerous positive comments from attendees.

At this point I would like to single out .....

James Sheridan – Turner Parkinson – Achievements in a medium sized law firm

Rob Elvin – Squire Patton Boggs – Achievements in a large law firm

Simon Whitehead – HRC Law – Achievements in a smaller law firm

Mark Blakemore – BLM – Dynamic financial management

Rachel Dobson – Hugh Jones – People management

.....and a bit if me

### Strategic

- Keep it simple. Needs to be practical
- Avoid “me too”
- Avoid the “status quo” – have to change with the times and recognise the new world
- Resources – define type of firm, drop poor performers – people and work- types, seek best of breed clients
- Understand positioning – geographic, vertical markets, work-types
- Each year undertake a 3 year strategy. Year 1 can be the budget for year 1 but only in reality lasts a month with perpetual forecasting
- Do not be a slave to the plan – be flexible and responsive
- A product marketing plan – products, services, features, benefits, target market and route to it essential
- Growth? If so self generated or acquisition and the consequences of merged cultures and platforms
- Focus – won't be good at everything
- Get smaller – niched – and be more viable and profitable
- Define style of business – consulting or litigious
- Ask the big question – Why? Fiscal return, business and personal interest, business first – law firm second

- Team priorities – open, honest, performance driven, delivery, team, ban inherited thinking, 100% clear objectives
- Need to advocate the strategy and the missions

#### Financial

- Remove areas of grey. Targets are set to be hit. Desire to fix the issues. Need data in time to do this
- Understand the strategic dynamics of the business and have KPIs to enable
- Working capital cycle management – unpaid tax is a debt  
recognise WIP varies by work-type
- Balanced portfolio if necessary to help manage working capital and ensure enough cash
- Manage sales, overhead and headcount – not a single dynamic
- Gross profit is key
- Trend key data review and perpetual forecasting
- HOD and FD potentially formal review weekly and then monthly ops board sign off
- KPI – is **Key Performance Indicator** – not Keeping People Informed. Demand action.

#### Operations

- Must have the right people for the business
- Want more than average people – poorer performers to be removed and there is always a poorest performer
- Clarity of expectation – chargeable, WIP, cash, new work
- Regular counselling and appraisals
- Need to believe in change management and have a process for it
- Process, systems, training culture
- Need clear decision making structure – speed is important
- Seek internal and external ideas and listen
- Lawyers need to listen to and recognise/respect the skills of non lawyers
- Need to invest in the business/IT platform – all with potential ROI
- Need to reduce the number of expensive lawyers through process
- Need to consider outsourcing for overhead cuts and enhanced mobility, agility and responsiveness – cashiering, IT, DD transcription, telephony, and recruitment.
- Flexibility around recruitment and staff retention – times, locations
- What's measured tends to get done
- Motivation needs to be constant and performance recognised
- Need to profile people as new recruits need to fit the culture

#### Customers

- Fully understand customer needs
  - Make the organisation and culture changes
  - Make the process changes
- Customer needs perpetually change
- Never stop focussing on clients
- Recognise the changing market. Private clients in particular want accessible law – cannot just say it – need to deliver it
- Commercial clients cutting multiple panels – need to have the skills to respond

## Leadership

- Who wants change? – 100%, Who wants to change? – 10%, Who wants to lead change - 0%
- Reward leadership
- Create and clarify benefits
- Get buy in from seniors
- Delegation and acceptance of accountability – ensure clarity of responsibilities and measures
- Work at loyalty
- Hold the line – no matter what
- Stepping out of line – punish
- Change the people or change the people
- Make sure that people understand responsibilities of others
- Communicate, mix/connections, trust, remove double standards (partners/staff), truth
- Integrity is key – managers are judged on behaviour.
- Morals – do the right thing even when not being watched

## Some BD – Client Acquisition and Retention

Speakers were:

Andrew Welch – MP at Stephenson Solicitors LLP

David Gilroy – Director at Conscious Solutions

...and a little bit of me.....

There were a number of additional/non standard ideas and tips

- Third party profiling – enabling review of current clients by post code and date of birth to enhance targeted marketing by geography
- On line personal check up and report
- Electronic signatures to capture prospects and speed file management
- Measure the success of itemised events and campaigns – process, culture, responsiveness, asking for the deal
- Capture the costs across the media used
- Identify the cost of acquisition – per New Client, per Existing Client (new matter), per Professional Referral. How can you budget marketing without this?
- The importance of client retention and development (it is the cheapest acquisition)
- What is the Lifetime Value of a client?
- Get e-mails opened by fear of missing out “only 5 places left” “don’t open you wont care anyway” – 18% get opened of include a swearword.
- PR should be the main driver not advertising – confirms existing and previous clients, tenders for bulk work, “award winning”
- Be prepared to measure a client satisfaction rating and be prepared to publish it
- Recognise we live in a multi-screen world – even wider than the “Y” generation now – phone, laptop and TV
- Recognise different devices are used at different times during the day 7.00am to 10.00am – phones, 10.00 – 17.00 PCs, tablets are prime 20.00 – 24.00

- Consumers unlock their phones 110 times a day. Going forward watch the growth of <http://thelinkapp.co.uk/>

A number of management matters columns this year have also relevance to much of the considerations above. IF PDFs would be useful please make contact with me or the MLS office.

June 2016 – partnership realism, April 2016 – Key Business Measures, July 2016 – Working Capital and GP – many more.....

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