

Leigh Day **Contributing to Leigh Day's future – helping one of the world's best human rights firms become more efficient and more capable**

Linetime's Liberate platform is helping niche human rights and personal injury firm Leigh Day deliver access to justice for more people around the world by providing better cost transparency and predictability, more workflow and process in the delivery of work and full Jackson reforms compliance.

Leigh Day is not like most law firms. It is a niche practice whose lawyers act exclusively for claimants who have been injured or treated unlawfully by others. As a result, it has some of the country's leading personal injury, clinical negligence, employment and international human rights teams.

But this doesn't mean it has any less need for the more 'business' end of legal technology; in fact, it probably needs it more than most, for cost efficiency and to manage cases involving hundreds or even thousands of claimants.

Workflow and good matter management has, as a result, become essential at Leigh Day. "The firm's recent switch to Linetime's Liberate case management system connected case and matter management to CRM and external client case tracking at the firm and has changed a great deal about how Leigh Day works for the better," says Managing Partner Frances Swaine.

It has permanently changed the way teams work on their wide portfolio of complex and often long-term cases. "Previously there was very little workflow, so with Liberate's introduction certain areas of the business are now much quicker." Choosing a new CMS/PMS meant a methodical and thorough beauty parade, but it was Liberate's single database solution, based on Microsoft technologies, that won the day. "We felt it was important to ensure we were ahead of the game with a system that could be learned and trained with ease," says Swaine. Working with an IT provider "that would be responsive, with a reasonable turnaround time on our questions" was also a must-have, she says.

Leigh Day's 280 users make it one of Linetime's bigger clients – "and everyone in the firm uses Liberate to some extent," says Swaine. She's confident that significant workflow and case handling benefits will be delivered across the firm, both through Liberate's general functionality and some tailored specialised modules.

"Every department will benefit in different ways. Not all will have a bespoke package but the fast track team, for example, which is only 13 people, will be able to benefit from the PI module despite being a small team."

Swaine says operational benefits have become apparent during the six months since phase one of the three-phase implementation went live in April 2013, such as "the speed of getting through cases, and easier time-recording, resulting in capturing more time."

"Eventually it's going to enable all the Leigh Day teams in certain work areas to work along the same pathway and to standardise practices where they can be – but flexibility is written in, because so much of the niche work is not standard," says Swaine. "We have adopted a system that is built for process, but we also have the ability to come off-process, for example for very complicated letters that are written daily."

Swaine says group claims is one area where workflows and process automation will have a large impact on the firm. "In these cases it is possible to have perhaps 10,000 clients. Linetime Liberate will bring much greater efficiencies, and the ability to look at a case from various perspectives at the push of a button.

"If you are working with potential 200 clients in Peru, say, who we are claiming are clients because of poisoning near a mine, there is so much to find out about the clients before you can determine which of those potential clients will eventually become the 50 people with valid claims.

"The use of a flow chart to work out clients' injuries and interests by just clicking a switch is significantly more efficient than working out your own Excel spreadsheet, and Linetime Liberate will help us to automate drawing together more robust information on claimants."

Leigh Day is an example of how niche law firms need the same kind of management information and business intelligence as that found in the corporate arena. The cutting edge business intelligence (BI) dashboard and client-facing extranets inside Liberate were two key reasons that Leigh Day chose the solution, and Swaine expects these elements to make significant impact on the way the firm works when they have been fully finalised and adopted.

"BI reports will be very important, especially with cases that have a 'long tail'," she says. Swaine predicts her teams will be "monitoring information that comes out of big cases over a long period of time more intelligently and assisting with predictions on cash flow and the cost of very large cases". The firm's previous system provided just a static snapshot of work, making it very difficult to get projections, she says. "Delivering reports to the whole partnership will ensure the partners are all aware of the financial status of work," she says. "We've never had a desktop BI module, and it takes some getting used to, but people are positive about the need to adopt the new methods."

Liberate's reporting capabilities have another vital plus point for Leigh Day. Working so often and directly with the clinical negligence system, the Jackson reform's introduction of Precedent H has had a lot of impact at Leigh Day. Swaine and her management teams have worked closely with Linetime on the development of a new Precedent H module for Liberate that automatically produces compliant costs forms and estimates – especially useful for large, long-term and complex group cases.

"We've been working with costs draftsman and the partners here to develop a module that works with Precedent H for people who have been put into court budgeting. All cases will be programmed in and everyone at the firm can use it. Without a module like this, it would be very difficult to comply across the board, even more so given the length and complexity of the work we do.

"The Linetime module gives lawyers themselves an accurate picture, so there is no reliance on the accounts team to answer questions, although they are able to see a lot more within the accounts team and get a broader picture." Without it, she says, "people would be adding things up themselves on multiple Excel spreadsheets". Swaine predicts that the firm will reap significant return-on-investment benefits from this work by mid-2014.

Leigh Day is also working with Linetime to define and develop Liberate as a whole, a partnership that will provide Linetime with valuable insights and see that Leigh Day gets the very best from the system. "Because we are ahead, Linetime can make use of information and learning from working with us for others and, similarly, when we have requests for more modules, they will help."

It's a worthwhile, long-term partnership, and Swaine says she knows Linetime is "adapting fast". "Few firms go live so soon but, once it's completed a year down the line, we shall have revolutionised the work of everyone at the firm."