

About This Blog:

This blog is devoted to exploring issues that continue to challenge law firms and their clients and to sharing ideas and tips about how the profession can or is innovating to adapt to the changing world of the "New Normal".

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Posted by **Susan Saltonstall Duncan** on Tuesday, 10 July 2012 in **Legal innovation**

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How PwC Imbeds Innovation into Its Culture



The Big 4 accounting/consulting firms have long been years ahead of law firms in the way they provide services, their early segmentation into industry verticals, their multi-disciplinary service offerings into business and legal services such as litigation, global and corporate compliance, business valuation and risk management -- especially outside the US where in some countries, the Big 4 had more licensed lawyers than law firms did (this has subsided a bit since Sarbanes-Oxley,) their thought-leadership initiatives, their pricing and profit models, and the list goes on.

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It is not surprising then to see that PwC has made a significant commitment to **innovation** and law firms can learn a lot from their forward-thinking initiatives. Some of the components of their successful program include:

1. **Innovation Leader:** Mitra M. Best is the U.S. Innovation Leader. Her job is "to inspire, evaluate and implement innovative ideas across the organization with the critical mission to support the development of new services and market opportunities across industries."

2. **Innovation Office:** "The Innovation Office works to accelerate innovation by inspiring new ideas and reducing barriers to their implementation. At PwC, we combine unique perspectives and fresh thinking to generate innovative solutions to complex business issues."

3. **PowerPitch Campaign:** This competition was open to all 30,000 people in the PwC U.S. firm. Those who chose to participate were asked to "identify a new service or an innovative delivery system for an existing service that could become a significant business offering to our clients." Participants organized themselves into project teams of two to nine members to develop plans that presented and supported their concepts. These teams were supported by coaches including formerly retired PwC partners. 10,000 PwC people participated resulting in 779 business proposals. The winning proposal and four runner-up teams were each awarded cash prizes.

4. **Global Innovation Network:** "This connects innovation teams across 30 territories, enabling them to share best practices, ideas and innovations around the world. Each territory determines its focus for innovation, which ranges from internal transformation efforts impacting organizational agility, to externally focused programs impacting new solutions for our clients' existing and emerging issues."

legalleadersblog.com

patrickjlamb.com

thoughtfullaw.com

5. **InnovaTV**: A library available to employees and web site visitors of "innovation-related videos showcasing creative thinking."

6. **iPlace**: the Innovation Office sponsors, iPlace -- the place for ideas, PwC's idea management platform. PwC professionals are encouraged to submit their ideas, comment on their colleagues' ideas and vote for their favorites. It is also used to generate ideas for current service challenges or solutions. "Engaging staff to crowdsource solutions to business 'Challenges' invites the firm to collectively participate in considering innovative ways of delivering more value to our clients. Crowdsourcing ideas through a variety of events helps engage our people in developing thoughtful ideas that can evolve into real solutions."

7. **"in-no- vate. Inspiring new ideas." blog.**

What are some things you can do to make innovation a priority and an embedded part of your culture?

Hire or appoint an innovation officer. This may need to be someone from outside the legal industry but still should be someone familiar with business process innovation and legal service/product innovation. It could be someone in a law firm, even in your law firm. Perhaps the Chief Strategy Officer (also a new position), the top client service or value professional, a project management/continuous improvement professional. While this person must oversee and serve as a catalyst for innovation, s/he must have strong backing from the firm's top leader and also not be described as the person to "do the innovation." That is everyone's job.

Rewrite everyone's job description. Incorporate specific behaviors and performance metrics in every position description and performance evaluation form that the firm or legal department uses. This is particularly important for partners and those in management/leadership, since they will need to lead by example and drive innovation.

Develop internal forums, communication vehicles and support. Your intranet should have a section devoted to innovation including tools, resources, an idea brainstorming "chat room" and a place to celebrate ideas and successes.

Establish interdisciplinary teams to explore innovation. Many law firms are siloed by practice specialty, geography and functional/administrative specialty. This means many people who are addressing new practice "products", technologies, staffing and training practices, profit and finance, and everything else it takes to run a law firm, often are not talking to each other much less innovating together.

Design and execute a competition. Make it all inclusive and incentivize people to take it seriously with a judges' panel and prizes. Have clients and other referral sources serve on the panel.

Collaborate with clients on innovation in service and value. Take a good look at everything you do for and with clients to find ways to bring and add value, from client service and engagement practices, protocols, project management, process improvement, knowledge management and collaboration, feedback and continuous improvement, pricing and budgeting, communication and relationship management. Work with clients to engineer new approaches for them and for other clients. Establish a client advisory board to help provide feedback on your innovation ideas.

Even just taking a small step by selecting one group or office of the firm to begin an innovation pilot program with will help push you in the right direction.

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