



ATTORNEY SPOTLIGHT SERIES:

Streamlining Processes: Attorney Jeff Dailey Talks Law Firm Efficiency

While the title Process Engineer doesn't appear on attorney Jeff Dailey's business card, it probably should. A former Big Law partner, Dailey prides himself at spotting and resolving inefficiencies—something he believes is critically important for client satisfaction. "Law firms have been really tied to a model, both on the operations side and the staffing side, that was created decades ago," he says. "And they still staff their cases the same way they did decades ago."

As a result, Dailey explains that many internal firm processes are prone to bottlenecks, redundancies and inefficiencies, which often lead to ballooned legal fees and unhappy clients.

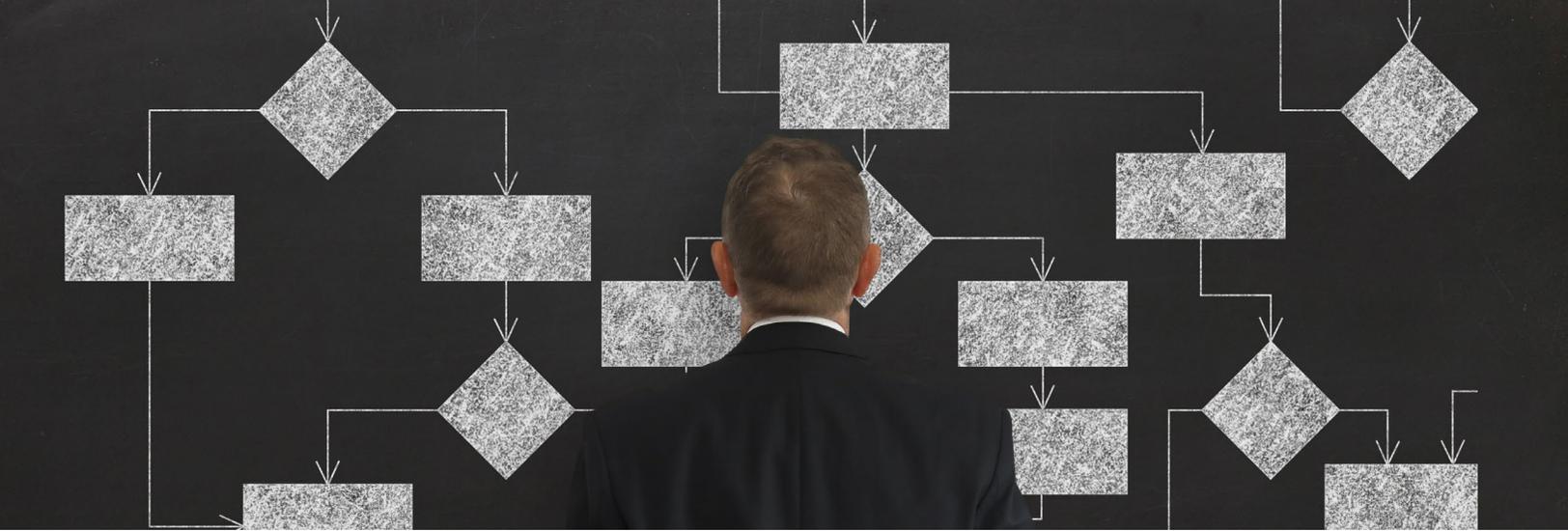
"When we launched our practice," he says, "we really set out to examine how work flows through a law firm." And clients see that approach in action with **Dailey LLP**, a firm that primarily handles high-stakes business, financial and construction litigation, as well as arbitrations and investigations.

A THREE-PRONGED EFFORT

Dailey says the firm's efficiency mantra can be broken down into three components: People, Process and Technology.

1. Make sure employee skillsets are aligned with the specific work being performed on each task.
2. Put process steps in the right order to alleviate log jams. Then check to see if work can be bypassed or done in parallel with other tasks.
3. Use technology to automate routine processes where possible.

He also stresses the importance of having a firm employee tasked with periodically looking at (and refining) processes. It doesn't necessarily have to be a dedicated role, he admits, but there should always be someone monitoring what work is being done, and by whom.



SPOTTING & FIXING INEFFICIENCIES

The first step towards efficiency, Dailey describes, is mapping out processes. By tracking how work flows through on individual cases, it becomes easier to spot and remedy issues.

And once found, he says that fixing process issues is often pretty straightforward.

“Some of the inefficiencies were eliminated simply by using different people—people with different levels of experience,” Dailey reports. By reexamining what roles were needed at each step in a process, the firm is better able to match up jobs with requisite skills. That means more experienced partners aren’t doing standardized tasks that could be handled by a paralegal (or automated entirely), and more junior people are not spinning their wheels on issues a more experienced attorney can more efficiently handle.

It also means that bills are aligned with value as clients aren’t being billed at senior partner rates for routine work or for several hours of junior attorney time for something an experienced attorney can handle in a third of the time.

HOW TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES EFFICIENCY

It’s no surprise that Dailey relies on technology to help streamline the firm’s processes. But it’s how the technology is leveraged that really gives Dailey LLP the edge. While he’s understandably hesitant about completely revealing the firms’ efficiency “secret sauce,” Dailey does offer a few specific examples.

For starters, he says giving the firm’s attorneys a portable monitor display to complement their laptop helps them maintain productivity when working remotely, simply due to the dual-screen capability.

Another example is Dailey LLP’s use of tablet and phone apps to provide attorneys secure, quick and easy access to firm files, research and timekeeping tools. Being able to replicate the efficiency an attorney has when sitting at their desk, even when they are not, is the goal.

Dailey also brings up the firm’s drafting process as a good example of efficiency at work.

“There are parts of most briefs as well as discovery requests and responses that draw off standard language, that are then customized,” he says. Instead of doing redundant work over and over again, or copying and pasting, the firm’s attorneys use automation tools so that they start with a document where the tested and proven standard language is already drafted.

Then, the lawyers only focus on modifying the critical legal language of the document, instead of basic grammar changes like his-to-her and singular-to-plural, which are handled through the automation tools. Dailey makes it clear that this isn’t a cookie-cutter process, rather it allows for the best use of the attorneys’ time. “We don’t have to nitpick the basics. That is done by technology.” That way, he can focus on the customized, deep legal analysis that his clients are really paying for.

CLIENT RESPONSE & FUTURE PLANS

Spoiler alert: people like getting smaller bills.

“Client response was phenomenal and immediate,” Dailey says. “They’re happy that they get a bill that truly reflects the value they receive.”

Dailey isn’t taking his foot off the efficiency pedal any time soon either. “This is the future” he quips, as he alludes to the firm’s approach.

“All we did was recognize what corporations and in-house counsel were saying,” Dailey explains. “They were looking for a boutique environment that could leverage deep experience at a better value and create a great client experience.”



And while he’s optimistic about the firm’s growth potential, Dailey makes it clear that he’s not interested in setting artificial goals or targeting specific revenue benchmarks. The primary focus was, is and will remain client satisfaction.

“Over time, client satisfaction will dictate how we grow” he says, “but we have a mission to deliver for our clients, and whatever we do growth wise has to be aligned with providing a better client experience and delivering our deep experience at a better value.”

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