

Professional Legal Management WeekSM: October 1-5, 2007

Nine organizations join forces to celebrate the evolution and progression of the global legal management profession.

BY BOB ABRAMSON

Association of Legal Administrators



Now in its third year, Professional Legal Management WeekSM (PLMW) offers an opportunity to reflect and take stock of our successes in educating the various stakeholders about the true meaning of PLMW and the legal management profession. It is also a time to recognize and understand that education is, indeed, an evolutionary process.

Held each year during the first week of October, PLMW is an ongoing endeavor to inform those within the profession, as well as others, what legal management professionals do on a daily basis on their behalf. It is *not* a mutual admiration society wherein we “pat each other on the back” and send out for pizza to celebrate our achievements.

While some may think that having a Professional Legal Management Week is a revolutionary concept, it is actually something that all members of the legal management profession have been struggling with, to some degree, for years – creating a better understanding of the *professional* natures of the jobs they do to ensure success in their firms. With regard to PLMW, we have planted the seeds, cultivated the soil, and nurtured the plants, but there is still much more to do before the tree bears fruit.

THE EVOLUTION

At this time, it is important that we reflect not only on how far members of the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA) have come in terms of their being recognized as true professionals within the legal community, but also on how the entire legal industry continues to change and evolve. We must always be vigilant, with a keen eye toward the future, in our recognition of how others perceive what individuals do within firms or corporate legal departments.

The evolution in legal management centers not so much on the individual, but rather on how the individual is perceived within the frameworks of those they work with, and within the business community in general. To help cultivate a positive, professional image for those in the legal management profession, ALA and eight partnering organizations have taken the lead to help foster and promote the PLMW concept.

In law firms, corporate legal departments, and other legal organizations, effective management takes broad

knowledge and expertise. It requires diverse skills and abilities, dedication, hard work, patience, and perseverance. And management in legal organizations is uniquely impacted by the fact that the practice of law is a service profession where, in addition to all the standard challenges, business decisions and management must mesh with service to clients, high degrees of accountability, public trust, and an intellectually charged and demanding environment.

THE PROGRESSION

Success in business, including the practice and business of law, can be characterized in many ways and contexts. Ultimately, success is the result of good management in action. Good management is professional management, and PLMW is all about the importance of that concept to success in the business of law.

PLMW is centered on awareness, understanding, education, and recognition. It is about “moving forward” and conveying what men and women in the legal management profession around the world do every day. It is an opportunity for education and for increasing management’s awareness and understanding of everyone in the organization. Among other things, this special week can be an impetus for better in-firm education about how your organization or legal department operates.

PLMW also provides a mechanism for recognizing those in legal management for what they do and the roles they play in their organizations’ successes, and in their service to clients and others in their organizations. “Man” is the principal syllable in “management,” and PLMW is in part tied to recognition of the human side of business success.

Another key component in PLMW’s progression is its focus on “Professional” – both in the sense of something done well and at high levels, and in the sense of a career

commitment by those in legal management. That is sometimes overlooked, but the level of commitment is no less than that made by lawyers in practicing law and being advisers, counselors, and advocates; it is present in those who are planners and designers, analysts and decision makers, managers and administrators, and supervisors and implementers.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Who are legal management professionals? One of PLMW's primary goals is to facilitate awareness and understanding

that multiple individuals, all with different skill sets, are integral components of a law firm's professional management team.

As such, part of PLMW's mission is to convey that law firm management is not confined to administrators or ALA members. Its focus is on professional legal management and on everyone on a management team who contributes to an organization's success – including managing partners, principal administrators, chief operating officers, and management specialists in areas such as marketing, human resources, information systems

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EXCLUSIVE CONTENT – IN PRINT AND ONLINE

The official Professional Legal Management WeekSM Web site – www.plmw.org – contains digital versions of all of the content featured in this magazine, plus much more exclusive online content provided by the partnering organizations:

- Association of Legal Administrators
- American Bar Association Law Practice Management Section
- International Legal Technology Association
- NALP – The Association for Legal Career Professionals
- International Paralegal Management Association
- Legal Marketing Association
- American Association of Law Libraries
- Managing Partners' Forum (United Kingdom)
- Australian Legal Practice Management Association

and technology, legal recruiting, library administration, and paralegal management. In addition to being ALA members, many of those with careers in those areas are also members of specialty law-related organizations. Eight of these organizations (see sidebar) join us as sponsoring PLMW partners, and the legal vendor community offers vital support as well.

The debut issue of *Professional Legal Management Week Magazine* strives to promote PLMW's goals of awareness, understanding, education, and recognition of the legal management profession. Read the many interesting articles within this magazine – and more exclusive content on the official PLMW Web site, www.plmw.org – and find ideas you can use in your firm or organization to carry out these goals and show pride in the role you play in the evolving legal management profession. ♦

about the author

Bob Abramson is the Director of Marketing for the Association of Legal Administrators. Contact him at babramson@alanet.org.