

How can law firms get better business results
from strategic planning?

Building Success into Business Strategy



WALKER CLARK

Performance Consultants to the International Legal Profession

Changing client needs and expectations...

Large global law firms entering new markets...

Decreased client loyalty...

Increased difficulty in recruiting and retaining top legal talent...

These are the realities of the new legal market. They also make it harder than ever to develop and execute a successful business strategy for your law firm. Many law firms report that their strategic plans are obsolete after as little as one year. Other firms develop what looks like a solid strategy, but cannot implement it.

Many law firms report that traditional strategic planning methods no longer work well. They often produce, at best, disappointing results. In some instances, a firm's three-year strategic plan is obsolete after a year.

Our clients also have told us that:

- Traditional strategic planning methods are too time-consuming, often taking up to a year just to develop and agree to the strategic plan. Law firms are understandably reluctant to commit to hundreds of thousands of dollars in consulting fees and partner time to write a document that may or may not produce results.
- Even then, traditional strategic planning seldom digs deeply enough into the client base to identify realistic opportunities, or into the firm's internal organization and culture to determine whether the firm has the resources needed to achieve the desired results.
- Many traditional plans overlook measurements, making it harder for the firm to determine whether the strategic plan has changed things for the better, or just changed things.
- In many instances, the firm's strategic plan is really just the work of a small group of

partners, but never gains the enthusiasm or support of their colleagues.

- In worst cases, it is written by consultants.

Walker Clark assists lawyers to develop and -- even more importantly -- execute successful business strategies that take advantage of the new competitive dynamics in today's legal market. We work with you to discover, define, and implement a set of business strategies that are unique to your organization's culture, your clients, and your practice. More importantly, we work with you through a successful implementation to measurable results.

Strategic plans that work

Walker Clark offers two basic planning methodologies. Although they are significantly different, they share several common features that are critical for successful implementation.

- Reliance on the knowledge, insight, and vision of the people of the law firm.
- Understanding of the environment in which the law firm competes for business and delivers its services to clients.
- Establishment of "common ground" -- those basic values and aspirations on which everyone agrees and is committed to support.
- Strategic goals defined in terms of specific, measurable desired outcomes.
- Action plans and implementation initiatives that fit the needs, resources, and culture of the firm.
- Ongoing support and facilitation by Walker Clark consultants in implementation.

Team-Led Strategic Planning

The planning process is managed by a strategic planning team, usually consisting of partners and senior managers. The team uses client surveys, client interviews, and internal questionnaires to collect a large amount of data in depth. This information is then analyzed to develop detailed strategic goals and implementing initiatives. The team organizes and prioritizes these goals and initiatives into a draft strategic plan, which is then reviewed, improved, and approved by the partners. The team then supervises

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execution of the plan, monitors performance measurements, coordinates resources, and makes adjustments as needed.

Although most of the planning is done by a small group, team-led planning involves everyone in the firm in implementation. Strategic implementation makes strong demands on the resources and culture of even the best-managed law firm. Therefore, Walker Clark continues to work closely with the team throughout implementation --- however long it takes --- to a successful conclusion.

In addition to the successful execution of the firm's business strategy, team-led strategic planning can produce a number of very important secondary results.

- Team-led strategic planning can be very effective in building teamwork within the firm, especially across department and practice-area boundaries.
- The firm can ensure that diversity and critical areas of expertise and experience are present on the team.
- The firm can develop a large volume of reliable information about its competitive position, which can then be used to improve marketing efforts.
- Internal surveys can identify opportunities for quick, breakthrough improvements in operating efficiency and morale.
- Team-led planning can be a very efficient and economical way to manage strategic planning and implementation in larger firms.

Team-led strategic planning typically takes three to six months to collect and analyze data and to develop and agree to a strategic plan. Implementation typically takes another 18 months to two years.

Future Search

Future Search has been used successfully in businesses and government organizations worldwide for the past 15 years. It is a comprehensive planning effort that identifies common goals and assigns responsibilities for achieving them. It is one of the most powerful and cost-effective planning methodologies ever developed.

The focal point of the Future Search is a single, 16-hour planning conference, usually spread over three consecutive days. To the extent possible, everyone who has a direct interest in the issue attends for the entire session. Future Search therefore involves some people who might normally not be invited to more traditional planning sessions, such as associates, support staff, and even some clients. The conference identifies areas of common agreement about what is most important to creating the business and professional future that the firm wants. The participants then develop, commit to, and assign responsibility for specific actions to achieve that future. The firm leaves the Future Search conference with a concrete, actionable plan, as well as a high level of personal and group commitment to it.

Walker Clark facilitates the conference with two trained, experienced Future Search facilitators. We also work with the firm through the successful execution of each of the action items generated by the conference.

Future Search has a number of distinct advantages and benefits for law firms:

- It develops the strategic plan in 16 hours, rather than the three to six months that more traditional strategic planning methods typically require.
- Future Search is based on consensus. The resulting action plans are more likely to succeed; because they are supported by all of the key people.
- The Future Search conference uses input from all stakeholders – not just partners, but also associates, staff, and clients, as appropriate.
- Future Search is especially effective for firms that have never attempted formal strategic planning, as well as those that have been disappointed by previous strategic planning efforts.
- Future Search aims at achieving realistic results that the firm actually wants, rather than just reacting to perceived threats in the marketplace.
- Future Search is particularly useful for organizations in highly competitive and rapidly changing markets, such as the legal profession.

Walker Clark... a better way

Walker Clark offers a compelling alternative to traditional legal management consultancies. Here is how we are different.

We provide a multidisciplinary approach to strategy, operations, and leadership. Walker Clark was founded by a lawyer and a psychologist. We apply knowledge from the fields of psychology and law practice management to the unique culture and needs of the legal profession. This produces breakthrough results for our clients.

Unlike consultancies that only occasionally work with lawyers, **we specialize in the special business needs and professional culture of the legal profession.**

We build ongoing relationships with our clients, not just engage in transactions.

We deliver world-class consulting services at a reasonable price. We believe that we should be responsible for the economical and efficient management of our engagements, not our clients. Therefore, we do not charge hourly rates. Whenever we can do so reliably, we include all expenses – even travel – in our fees.

We stand accountable to our clients for the results of our services and advice, and are willing to share in their risk and rewards.

Walker Clark consultants are based in Brazil, Chile, Germany, Italy, and the United States; but we deliver services whenever and wherever needed. For more information, please contact us at your convenience.

The Walker Clark international team



Walker Clark is an international network of highly experienced professionals in Europe, Latin America, and North America.



We come from many different professional and business backgrounds. Some of us have decades of experience in the legal profession. Others come from other professional disciplines or business environments.



Each Walker Clark consultant has extensive hands-on experience – measured in decades, not just years – in management or customer relations in major legal service organizations or in large businesses, government agencies, or quasi-governmental enterprises. We have experienced first hand the issues on which we advise our clients in the legal profession.



Each member of our team has substantial international experience. All of us are bilingual or multilingual. We constantly seek to learn about and learn from the diverse national and professional cultures that have enriched the global practice of law.

Walker Clark, LLC

<http://www.walkerclark.com>

Worldwide Client Service Center
1111 Brickell Avenue, Suite 1100
Miami, Florida 33131
+1.305.913.7180
fax: +1.239.415.3614