

## The Value of Thompson Hine

At Thompson Hine, service excellence and innovation go hand in hand. When clients told us they wanted to see significant changes in the way their law firms work with them, we responded by creating SmartPaTH<sup>®</sup>, our comprehensive approach to managing and delivering legal services to achieve efficiency, transparency and predictability without sacrificing quality. It is based on leveraging four major strategies – legal project management (LPM), process efficiency, flexible staffing and value-based pricing – to better align our services with clients’ needs.



### Client Benefits

SmartPaTH has been very well received by clients. It enhances the value we provide and delivers multiple benefits, including:

- Increased predictability in amount and timing of legal spend
- Unparalleled visibility into the status/progress and budget of a matter (or portfolios of matters)
- Better alignment of objectives and expectations
- More efficient processes and more consistent work product
- Reduced likelihood of surprises and cost overruns

### Legal Project Management

LPM is a key element of SmartPaTH. Many law firms have been slow to adopt the project management principles that were embraced by other professional services firms years ago, but that’s where Thompson Hine differs. With SmartPaTH, we use a formal, disciplined LPM process to define, plan and execute cost-efficient, successful engagements. A typical engagement using our LPM tools and methodologies includes the following steps, each undertaken in partnership with the client:

- Define the scope of the matter or engagement, including key dates, decision points, deliverables, risks and uncertainties, appropriate staffing and accountabilities
- Create a detailed work plan and budget
- Monitor progress against work plan and budget during the full course of the engagement
- Conduct a meaningful post-engagement review to capture lessons learned and efficiencies for subsequent engagements

We draw on a variety of LPM tools to effectively manage every matter or engagement. Our unique resources include:

- Our [Chief Practice Innovation Officer](#), who oversees the development, implementation and execution of the processes and tools that empower our legal teams. He even works with clients upon request to foster LPM best practices within their own organizations.
- Our proprietary budget and work plan tool that uses custom matter-type work plans to establish a breakdown of the work, estimate hours, assign resources to tasks and formulate a budget. Use of this tool typically reduces the time necessary to develop a realistic, detailed budget and work plan from days to, in some cases, hours.
- Our exclusive matter and portfolio management tool that ensures seamless communication. This resource enables our lawyers to generate a wide variety of reports for monitoring the progress of a matter or portfolio of matters and keep clients up to date.

## Process Efficiency

Effecting continual process improvement is a critical element of Thompson Hine SmartPaTH. While every client and every engagement is unique, we build efficiencies around the characteristics shared by like matters. For example, some transactional matters may progress through a relatively common lifecycle; some cases may be directed through predictable phases of litigation. We harness those similarities to build infrastructure that supports them all while allowing for maximum flexibility and customization. Our strategies to increase efficiency include:

- Mapping workflow processes to identify redundant steps, gaps and opportunities to streamline
- Establishing monitoring systems that correspond to mapped processes to ensure our teams are following the designated procedures
- Creating template documents and forms that reflect best practices for each type of service
- Developing an extensive library of toolkits and data-driven budgets that are customized for specific practice areas (e.g., Litigation, Business Restructuring, Corporate Transactions, Intellectual Property, Labor & Employment, Product Liability, Real Estate, etc.)
- Sharing our support systems and technology with clients to enhance the effectiveness of our work with them

Best of all, as a full-service firm, the SmartPaTH advantage increases exponentially as our lawyers' collective experience and best practices are institutionalized to the benefit of all of our clients.

## Flexible Staffing

We staff efficiently and look for options to manage cost without sacrificing results. Not every task associated with the delivery of a legal service requires a lawyer. Planning an engagement and deciding at the outset how tasks will be accomplished provides an opportunity to disaggregate portions of phases and tasks, and assign lower-cost staff where appropriate. Our proprietary budget and work plan tool enables engagement leaders to model staffing scenarios with the most apt combinations of resources and costs.

Where a project is amenable to flexible staffing options, we engage these resources. We employ non-lawyers when appropriate for special roles (e.g., construction project managers). We also employ lawyers acting in special capacities and not as lawyers (e.g., litigation management, tax return preparation). And, of course, we engage contract lawyers and temporary legal staffing when needed to handle high-volume tasks such as document production.

## Value-Based Pricing

For more than 20 years, we have worked closely with clients to provide alternatives to the standard hourly rate billing structure. Thompson Hine currently has about 2,500 active engagements using a value-based pricing model.

Using uniform task codes across all firm matters provides a central repository for financial analysis. We review historic spending at the phase and task level, allowing us to compare the expected effort for a particular engagement with prior similar matters. Combined with our exclusive budget and work plan tool, our lawyers are able to create data-driven budgets and proactively propose a variety of alternative fee arrangements. In addition, our Pricing Manager, working closely with our CFO, serves as a central point of analysis and consultation firmwide.



Named one of the 22 best law firms nationwide (out of 650) at developing and implementing alternative fee arrangements.

- *BTI State of Alternative Fee Arrangements 2016*