

2022

THE AMERICAN LAWYER

TRAILBLAZERS

MIDWEST

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What was the genesis of the idea/path that has made you a trailblazer?

Brian Lamb was the primary sponsor of the creation of his firm's proprietary web-based litigation budgeting software. Using various prototypes, the firm developed a detailed, user-friendly budget and work-planning tool that integrates with its financial systems. As the Business Litigation practice group leader, Lamb understands that clients value predictability, transparency, and cost containment. His next step, implementing mandatory budgeting, required a willingness to mandate change.

What sort of change has resulted from the concept?

After brainstorming sessions with the firm's Chief Practice Innovation Officer, Bill Garcia, Lamb proposed to the Business Litigation partners adoption of a policy requiring entering a peer-reviewed budget and work plan in the system within 60 days of opening a new litigation matter, whether or not the client requested one. Within 12 months, the number of budgets generated increased from about six to more than 45 per month, and the monetary value of "budgeted work" in the system more than tripled. This success prompted other firm practice groups to adopt a policy, and now virtually every group has a budget mandate.

What bearing will this have on the future?

A well-designed budget does more than provide a financial estimate; it sets priorities, reflects strategy and staffing needs, and prompts early discussions with clients about a matter's overall roadmap. Mandatory budgeting results in more reliable data for business forecasting, fewer unpleasant surprises, and increases client satisfaction. Automatic Actual-versus-Budget Reports prompt frequent communication with the client, keeping them apprised of progress, and allowing for earlier intervention when unforeseen changes might affect the budget or timeline.