

# What *exactly* is 'Lean'?

**'Lean' is a concept that is all about working smarter by wasting less time and effort. In business, it focusses on increasing client satisfaction through continuous business process improvement. A lean business creates a more efficient workplace while enhancing value for clients.**



Law firms can use a number of tools and strategies to help them streamline the business and cut down on wasteful activities and ways of working. This works for everyday problems that lawyers encounter in their usual work, such as information that is missing or incorrect and is holding up a case's progression.

Lean has its origins in manufacturing as it was developed by Toyota in 1945 but it spread into the services sector from the late 1990s and more recently the same principles have been applied to law firms to dramatically improve efficiency and reduce costs.

To fully appreciate lean and how valuable a tool it can be, you must first understand what a process is. Almost any task that has a beginning, a middle and an end can be described as a process, including the practice of law. Practically every service your firm provides contains a series of repeatable, describable steps. Each service has a process.

When your processes are analysed you can start to see where the wasted time and efforts lie. From there you can start to make your firm lean, but you'll need an open mind and be amenable to change and improvement and get buy-in from the whole team. The culture and leadership style of your firm plays a big role in how successful a lean approach can be.

## Keyhouse and lean

Keyhouse has always been all about helping law firms to become more efficient. More profitable. More lean. We bring the innovative technology and business process improvement services to help you manage your practice more effectively and improve the way you do business. Applying our lean principles will help you save time and money and increase your capacity and competitiveness.

The move to a lean law firm is also very much dependent on people and process. As part of our lean approach, our team of qualified lean yellow and green belts work with our clients to align the three key elements of people, process and technology to ensure the improvement drive is effective and gets the desired results.

## Lean and you

With over 400 clients, Keyhouse has a hands-on understanding of law firms operate and what makes some more efficient than others. We can show you how applying a lean approach in conjunction with Keyhouse workflows for the different areas of the firm's work can build capability, drive efficiencies and profitability.

Keyhouse is the expert in developing workflows for the various legal services you provide, including conveyancing, litigation and probate. We know that much of a solicitors' time is spent handling the mundane housekeeping and day-to-day tasks. Applying lean techniques, we work with clients to examine their processes and technology, seeing and understanding how work is carried out and what is affecting the outcome.

A Keyhouse lean programme will dive deeply into areas of your business, examining current processes to identify opportunities for improvements to help eliminate waste and save time and so increase your firm's efficiency.

It is a very focused programme with measurable objectives and milestones to be reached along the way.

### What next?

[Click here to see what Joe Thomas of O'Reilly Thomas LLP Solicitors in Drogheda had to say about his experience with applying lean principles.](#)

Or contact us on (01) 290 2222 for a chat about all things lean.

### Examples of Lean

- Analysing Matter opening to closing times to determine overall cycle time and identify opportunities for reducing time to provide a quicker client response and reduce waste.
- Value stream mapping of a Billing process to identify current problem areas.
- Eliminating waste in a Probate process by increasing the use of support staff operating a workflow for 80% of a matter and using the Partners to handle the complex 20%

