

TRANSLATION?

I have often referred to working in Lit Support as being a translator: translating techy to lawyer and vice versa. This skill is invaluable in the space and sometimes underrated until it is experienced or witnessed. Recently, I have realized there is another language to be translated, one that I have long taken for granted by virtue of my own career path.

Since mid-summer, I have been spending nearly, every-other week onsite with a client engaged in thousands of high stakes litigations. Over this time period, and for months before I became involved, their service provider had been underperforming – in every sense of the word; missed deadlines, lack of communication, pushing responsibility, failure to build any type of partnership with the client, and outright noncompliance with client requests.!

At first, I was just in disbelief, I could not put my finger on what was going so wrong. Each member of the team seemed to be engaged, proficient in their area of expertise, and trying hard to do right by the client – so where was it all falling apart? The client was convinced that the problem was that the business was too segmented, the right hand was not talking to the left, and a lack of leadership to overcome the separation. To that end, he had repeatedly requested someone to be conductor, someone to get all of the trains moving in the same direction. The provider made a couple attempts to fulfil the client's request, but each time fell short.

After months of working with the team, I have finally put my finger on it: the project managers, directors, leadership have never had to be the “do-ers” and have not taken the time to fully understand workflows, processes, potential pitfalls, dependencies, and timelines of each segment. They are simply the liaison, the voice on the end of the phone with the client relaying information they have been provided by the “do-ers” behind the scenes. Information, they do not fully understand. What my client has been missing and needing all this time, was not just someone to take lead on his project, it was someone who could translate.

Throughout my career I have known and focused on understanding the process and workflow for each step through the EDRM. Not just a high-level understanding, but an in-depth working knowledge of “how to” at each step. In different roles over the years, I have been the directly responsible “do-er” of many of these and have overseen teams directly responsible for others. I have found that one cannot effectively lead a team whose process she does not understand. Luckily, by nature I ask A LOT of questions and have a deep curiosity for everything unknown to me. What has been a personal focus through my career has now become a core characteristic and focus to instill in my team.

I have not been able to “fix” everything for my client – that's all a work in progress. But, I have been able to be the translator – to dive deeply into each process and workflow, find places to be more efficient and increase defensibility.

Sincerely,



The FIXER (aka: Kendra Smith)