

Value Practice:

Partnering for Worldwide Value at Squire Sanders

Submitted by: Patrick D. Cornelius and Susan M. DiMichele, co-chairs of Squire Sanders Value Partner TeamSM

With clients focused on value more than ever, Squire Sanders shares that it has launched Partnering for Worldwide ValueSM (PWV), a formal initiative that expands ongoing efforts to align every aspect of the firm around client value. The initiative is described as being actively championed by the firm's Global Chair, firm leadership and a specific team, the Squire Sanders Value Partner TeamSM (VPT), established to support and drive the PWV initiative.

PWV and Its Covenant

The firm's response to the ACC Value Challenge[®] is direct. A VPT-authored white paper, "Partnering for Worldwide Value," includes Squire Sanders' formal endorsement of the ACC Value Challenge, as well as the ["Squire Sanders Partnering for Worldwide Value Covenant"](#).

The covenant rests on the following 10 key principles. These principles challenge Squire Sanders lawyers to consider continuously the client's perspective and to remedy any disconnect between the costs for outside legal services and the value the client receives from those services:

- Understand your business, and add value through client-specific study and information-sharing efforts, promotion and sharing of industry experience and expertise, and formation of client service teams where appropriate;
- Advise you if we do not have the experience or expertise you seek or need, and in such cases either supplement our team or make an appropriate referral;
- Use the most appropriate staffing as identified in discussions with you, including exploring nontraditional staffing;
- Proactively offer alternative fee structures;
- Provide budgets and estimates for the specific engagement and advise you immediately if there may be material changes;
- Continuously work to become more cost-effective in the delivery of our services and those of other vendors utilized on your behalf;
- Understand that you normally seek neither elegance, new law, nor perfection unless those provide value consistent with your objectives in a particular matter;
- Train our attorneys efficiently and effectively without imposing additional and unwarranted costs on you, and bill for the services of attorneys in a manner consistent with their experience and professional development;
- Employ knowledge management and other information-leveraging tools to avoid "reinventing the wheel"; we train our lawyers and other professionals to look first to past work product and encourage efficiency and continuous improvement; and
- Use technology to the mutual benefit of you and us, including electronic billing when requested.

How Does the Firm Use the Covenant?

- Promote dialogue with clients
- Internal metric – firm lawyers are required to reflect on whether and to what degree they are adhering to the firm's values and standards, as well as what else they could be doing for clients

- Checklist for client/firm reviews
- Guide for the firm's lawyers in their efforts to improve client relationships

Squire Sanders lawyers are encouraged to share the covenant and white paper with clients to convey what clients can and should expect from the firm, and to solicit their feedback on what they value most. PWV charts key milestones in a client relationship when it may be especially useful to begin a conversation with clients about ways to improve the delivery of value, such as the start of a new client relationship or matter, a debriefing session when a matter concludes or an annual review of the firm's performance.

Driven From the Top, Implemented on the Ground

The Value Partner Team charged with guiding PWV consists of nine core members, including firmwide practice and office leadership, senior nonlawyer professionals and partners representing diverse geographic and substantive backgrounds. The firm's global chair is one of the architects of PWV and an integral participant on the VPT. The firm shares that, collectively, the members of the VPT bring knowledge and perspective from key areas such as practice areas, finance, process improvement and knowledge management. The VPT identifies, encourages and manages the development and implementation of processes and tools arising from best practices identified by practice groups, offices, industry groups and clients.

FOCUS: COMMUNICATIONS

For example, communications is one area of intense best practice focus. Lawyers seek ways to encourage clients to express what they need. The firm shares this could mean lawyers develop listening skills that contribute to value results at a reasonable cost or bringing together clients within the same industry for an onsite thought leadership program.

- *Client Service Teams (CST)*- The firm's Client Service Teams program is an example how the firm uses client communication to provide more efficient service. CSTs bring together lawyers from across practices and jurisdictions and are dedicated to understanding a client's business, issues and priorities, and most importantly, how that client wishes to be served by its legal advisers.

CST leaders are assigned by firm leadership and in many cases are vetted by the clients themselves. Based on client feedback, the firm designates the CST leaders as chief liaisons and the single point of contact for the client. The firm says these leaders help ensure all team activity is coordinated and consistent with client goals. Team leaders are responsible for meeting regularly with the client's general counsel or other key legal service purchasers. The firm shares that these regular meetings between client and team leader help ensure the firm is ahead of the curve on the client's business needs and priorities. The meetings are also a chance for frank conversation about individual lawyers and matters to ensure that any issues that could become problematic are promptly identified and resolved.

- *Ongoing Conversation Between Firm Leadership and Clients*- Squires Sanders shares that one of the tangible actions on the ground resulting from PWV is ongoing conversation between firm leadership and clients, and that a central topic of these discussions is better understanding what value means to individual clients and discussing how the firm can support those client goals. The VPT holds conference calls every other week to monitor

progress, logistics and next steps, and to identify further opportunities to leverage tools and processes.

- *Intranet Dedicated to Value Proposition-* In addition, the firm has an intranet site dedicated to its value proposition. The intranet includes:
 - VPT mission statement, which reads, “The Squire Sanders Value Partner TeamSM supports and equips the Squire Sanders professionals with resources to succeed in an increasingly competitive and value-focused legal services market by Partnering for Worldwide ValueSM with our clients. This is accomplished through the utilization of processes, tools and concepts that drive value for our clients, strengthen our client relationships and support the business objectives of our clients and the firm.”
 - Blog
 - Discussion board
 - News board
 - Forum for sharing examples
 - Resource library
 - External links and
 - VPT contact information

All personnel within the firm have access to the VPT intranet, which is administered by VPT co-leaders. Firm personnel are encouraged to share much of the intranet content as part of the firm’s ongoing focus on value, although some proprietary information is marked for internal use only.

Technology at Work

Squire Sanders shares that use of technology is a core element of the PWV initiative. As an example, the firm implements Lexis Search Advantage[®], which is described by the firm as the next generation of LexisNexis Total Search[®], a research tool that allows users to simultaneously search both the LexisNexis database and the Squire Sanders document repository through the lexis.com interface. The firm shares that this tool allows it to search faster for needed information, as well as to create client work product without reinventing the wheel.

Fee Arrangements With Value

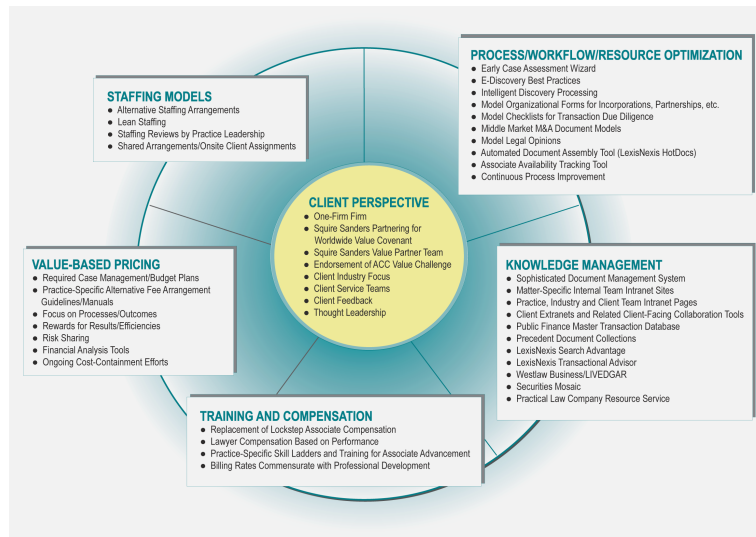
Squire Sanders addresses alternative fee arrangements in the context of PWV. Lawyers are encouraged to discuss fee agreements with the view that the best alternative fee arrangement for a particular engagement will be one that meets the needs of both the client and the firm. To facilitate these dialogues, the VPT developed an alternative fees quick reference guide, which the firm describes as including a step-by-step approach to discussing optimal arrangements with clients and how to track results, and a non-exhaustive list of fee model examples that runs the gamut from simple discounted rates to “hybrid partially fixed fees and partially contingent fees,” that have been utilized throughout the firm.

PWV--An Example of Translating Principles to Action: Case Management Plans and Budgets

An example of a practical result of the PWV initiative includes practices now implemented by the firm’s litigation group: case management plans and budgets are now mandatory, as well as periodic detailed case reviews by senior litigation leadership. The firm shares that case management process outlines client goals and strategies and then aims to identify the best

litigation tools needed to act on those strategies, as well as assesses any potential risks associated with the goals and strategies. As a case progresses, litigation practice leadership and others periodically meet with case team leaders – at no additional cost to clients – to discuss case themes, staffing and budget, and to help ensure client concerns and questions are addressed. The firm explains that this additional review provides a great opportunity to cross-check quality control, confirm that the case team includes the most appropriate mix of legal talent and experience, and ensure that matters are being handled within budget.

The illustration below provides an overview of the many specific components PWV addresses:



Contact Information:

Squire Sanders Value Partner Team Co-Chairs
Patrick D. Cornelius (pcornelius@ssd.com)
Susan M. DiMichele (sdimickele@ssd.com)