

ACC Value Challenge “Meet. Talk. Act.”

Corporate clients and law firms interested in ACC’s Value Challenge are asking how to get started. We suggest three simple steps: “Meet. Talk. Act.”

Step 1: Meet

The easiest way to start is for in-house counsel to pick their three best law firms or practice groups and for outside counsel to do the same with their three best clients. Arrange a two-hour bag lunch with a single question for discussion:

Question: Working together, how do we improve the value of legal services?

This is the same question that was discussed at a number of regional sessions prior to launching the ACC Value Challenge. The first hour typically was spent getting participants to realize that everything was open for discussion, on both sides. Once the ice was broken, the breakthroughs were dramatic.

Step 2: Talk

Among the issues that came up in the regional meetings and which might be considered in your discussions:

1. How can we reestablish trust and improve our relationship, on both sides?
2. How can we assure an adequate flow of work so that outside lawyers understand the client better and can be more efficient in what they do?
3. How can we get junior lawyers better trained, priced at more reasonable levels, practicing law more on the front line, and less likely to leave?
4. How can we better budget and manage costs and staffing?
5. How can we better institutionalize the relationship?
6. How can we evaluate progress and performance?
7. How can we create a culture of continuous improvement, on both sides?

Step 3: Act

At the end of the meeting, agree to try out some of the ideas, even if on a small scale, and to meet regularly to assess these efforts.

Over time, you can see what works and what doesn’t. You hopefully will find some approaches that achieve the following or similar results – and by the way, they really are not mutually exclusive:

1. Improve the value of legal services.
2. Decrease costs.
3. Keep the client out of trouble.
4. Maintain firm profitability.
5. Develop approaches that can be scaled up and attempted in other areas.
6. Improve training and career satisfaction, on both sides, and reduce attrition.