A COO dashboard for law firms, run inside the firm

What it shows, who sees what, and what loading your own firm's data involves

For COOs, finance directors and managing partners · Alt-V Law

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In short. I've built a COO dashboard laid out the way a COO uses one: a Weekly Ten, a monthly operating view and a quarterly board view. It reads an extract from the firm's practice management system and runs on a machine inside the firm, so nothing leaves it. Open the demonstration at **tools.derekduffy.com/coo-dashboard/**; the firm in it is fictional and every figure is synthetic.

What the demonstration finds

In the demonstration firm's Disputes division, about 100 partners and 480 lawyers, lock-up is 156 days against 133 a year earlier, profit per equity partner (PEP) is up 7.8%, and associate attrition has risen to 29% from 12%. The firm is Calder Whitlock LLP, fictional, with synthetic figures and three planted problems.

PROBLEM	WHAT THE NUMBERS SHOW	WHAT HIDES IT
Cash	Lock-up 156 days against 135 for the firm; arbitration matters at 224 days	Division profit, which does not carry the lock-up
People	Leverage down from 6.5 to 5.8; four credible candidates for seven partner places	PEP, which rises when leavers are not replaced
Capped investigations	32% of capped and fixed fee matters projected more than 15% over budget; this year's capped matters earn 36% after the partner notional, against 41% last year	Billing realisation, which still reads 89%

What it shows

The Weekly Ten. The same ten numbers every Monday, as at the Sunday before: lock-up, WIP and debtor days, cash conversion over 13 weeks, unbilled disbursements, non-partner utilisation, time recording delay, capped and fixed fee matters over budget, weighted pipeline, and client due diligence complete before a matter opens.

The monthly operating view. Eight families: financial and working capital; matter and client economics; people and capacity; operations and business services; divisional economics; risk and governance; technology and AI; client and market. Tiles drill from division to practice, partner and matter wherever the data sits at that level.

The quarterly board view. 12 tiles across performance, working capital, people and risk, with a four-page A4 board pack and a divisional P&L that counts revenue two ways.

Partners and progress. Partner scorecards in lockstep, modified lockstep or merit order; an interdependency view that sets pairs of measures side by side; and a progress tracker with a baseline and a 90-day path for each problem.

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Behind all of it is a dictionary of 134 measures, each with its definition, owner and how it gets gamed. Where no published benchmark exists the threshold is the firm's to set, and the tile says so. Terminology switches between UK and Australian, and figures between pounds and Australian dollars (a display conversion only).

Who sees what

Each role gets its own file, sliced before it is written, so a file never holds another reader's figures. The managing partner, COO and finance director see everything; a division head sees their division in full and other divisions at division level; a practice head sees their practice's partners and matters and other practices as totals; business services see totals only.

A partner sees their own scorecard and matters, and their practice's spread as five numbers per measure, with no other partner named. A practice with fewer than five partners gets no spread, because with so few the figures would identify individuals. A single setting swaps names for codes at load. The demonstration is one synthetic dataset and switches between roles in the browser.

Loading your own firm's data

The dashboard reads exports from your practice management system, and there is no live connector. Finance supplies the extract, HR and the management accounts supply salary bands and costs, and a mapping, filled in once, says which column holds what. Starting mappings exist for Elite 3E, Aderant, Actionstep and LEAP; each row carries a confidence tag (verified, label or guess), and your finance team checks each row against your own data dictionary, or records why it stays a guess, before anything loads.

A check then says in plain English what to fix, before anything is calculated. Your WIP, debtors and fee income, as your own reports state them, are compared with what the dashboard rebuilds: a gap up to 2% is within tolerance, a gap above 2% raises a warning, and a gap over 10% on WIP or debtors stops the build.

The process guide plans for four to six weeks from a signed data-handling schedule to the first dashboards, most of it spent waiting on extracts and sign-off; the finance systems lead needs three to five days, the finance manager two to three, and a monthly refresh about half a day.

Where it runs, and how it is offered

It runs on a machine inside the firm and needs no network connection; nothing leaves the firm, and Alt-V holds none of its data. IT installs it (a Python install today; a Windows installer is in preparation), and the role files go out through the firm's own document system. Before any firm's real data goes in, the version is reviewed by someone who did not build it, and Alt-V gives the firm the review note.

It is offered as an annual licence priced by fee-earner band, plus an implementation scoped to each firm, in which Alt-V runs the first load alongside your team. UK firms are quoted in pounds and Australian firms in Australian dollars, each priced on its own inputs rather than converted.

See it

Open **tools.derekduffy.com/coo-dashboard/** and press Guided tour; it walks through the division in 14 steps. If you'd like a walk-through together, or want to see how your own system's export would map, reply to derek.duffy@altruisticventures.com and we'll arrange a call.

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