Ep #117: The Bomb on the Bus: A Law Firm Productivity Problem with Clarke Ching

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

John E. Grant

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John: There's a management strategy that a lot of law practice leaders instinctively reach for when productivity is lagging: threats or ultimatums.

Today, I'm bringing back one of my favorite guests, the bottleneck guy, Clarke Ching. And Clarke refers to this notion as putting a bomb on the bus, thinking it will make the bus go faster. It might work for a while, but even if the bomb never goes off, the bus is going to take a lot of damage.

You're listening to *The Agile Attorney Podcast*, powered by GreenLine. I'm John Grant, and it is my mission to help legal professionals of all kinds build practices that are profitable, sustainable, and scalable for themselves and the communities they serve. Ready to become a more Agile Attorney? Let's go.

A quick note before we get started. The concepts in today's episode should be useful to you no matter what kind of practice you're part of or what tools you use. If you'd like, stay tuned at the very end of the episode for a brief discussion on how my software tool, GreenLine, supports the Agile lawyering practices we discuss.

Welcome back, everyone. So, Clarke Ching, the bottleneck guy, was first on this show back in episode 39, which remains my most listened-to episode of all time. But don't worry if you missed it. You'll catch on pretty quickly.

Today, we're going to go a little deeper on some of the ideas from that conversation, because Clarke is a master at the Theory of Constraints, or TOC for short, which is the formal framework behind bottleneck thinking. It was first articulated by workflow expert Eli Goldratt in his book, *The Goal*. But Clarke has spent his career making Goldratt's ideas accessible and actionable for everyday people and organizations. And I asked him to start today by giving us a quick refresher on what bottlenecks are and why they matter.

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Clarke: Okay, I'll start with why we care about them, and I'm just going to choose my language carefully here, because that they strangle. They strangle businesses, all sorts of businesses. They sit inside our business and they strangle them, and sometimes they, they kill them. That's why we care.

So, not my most recent book, but the book before that was called *The Bottleneck Detective*, and it's just a really good framing for thinking about what people like you and I, what we do. We come in and we have this detective mode, and we're trying to find the possibly well-meaning resource, the person, or the machine, whatever it is, the slowest resource in the company that's just slowly strangling our business, and maybe even trying to kill it. And it is, it's like a, if you think of a bottleneck as being like a choke, a choker, it's squeezing the business, but it can just be a tiny little bit of the business.

There's so many analogies for this, but obviously, the first one is, if you grab your Tabasco sauce and you tip it upside down, it's obviously got a bottleneck on it at the top. And that's actually a really good bottleneck, because it's deliberately choking how quickly the liquid comes out so you don't end up making your head explode with too much sauce. That's a really good bottleneck. You've got other bottlenecks which just limit, as a business, how much work you can do.

So, for instance, I'm working with a company at the moment where they have a massive backlog of work and they just can't keep up with it. There's all of this potential revenue sitting there. They have about 100 people and there are three people who do one particular role, and they are the bottleneck for the entire company. Those three people are choking how much revenue the entire company... And it's not out of badness, they're working really hard. They're some of the most gifted people in the company.

And we worked with them and we got a 23% increase in their revenue by just looking intently at that one little part of the company and getting them work better. And that's why it's magic. You focus in like a detective, you find the little bit that's choking the business, and then you open it up.

And if I just give you one more metaphor, sorry, this will be a metaphor overload. Just imagine everyone who's listening, wander out into your garden, if you have one. Look at your garden hose. If it's got kinks in the hose and the water isn't flowing out fast enough, the kinks are the bottlenecks. And that's what you have in your business. And if you put dollar signs on the flow, it's not just water coming out, it's dollars coming out. Then you're actually choking the flow of the product that comes out that turns into dollars. So you're actually choking, starving your business.

John: Yeah, I can give you an example from my recent work life, too, where working with a law firm. And I should say, the thing you just described as far as potential for work relative to the capacity of a team to deliver work, that is the experience of just about every law practice that I come up against, right?

Clarke: I can imagine.

John: There aren't enough lawyers in the world to meet the need for legal services that society has.

Clarke: It's funny. No non-lawyers would actually say that. There aren’t…

John: No, they wouldn't. The challenge in most law practices isn't how do we get more leads. Obviously, that is important. It's mostly how do we make better use of the potential that we have. And so that's where the bottleneck clearly comes in.

The example that I ran into working with a firm, and this isn't uncommon. I would say there are two key points where I see bottlenecks form in law practices. One of them, and one of the things I hear all the time from

especially senior attorneys or law firm owners is, I know where the bottleneck is, it's me. I'm the bottleneck. They're right, of course, but also it's a little more complicated than that because sometimes it's a process bottleneck, sometimes it's a resource constraint. Often, it's an information sharing problem. So there's any number of ways to get at it.

Clarke: So I think what they're mistaking is two things there. It's actually true that they are the bottleneck, but they're not the bottleneck. There are other things around them who mean that they are overwhelmed with work. Whereas if you looked around them, you could do better coordination, maybe hire a chief of staff or who knows what it would be.

And then they would be the bottleneck and they would get more out. But they're not recognizing that there is a bottleneck. So the two things are that they feel like a bottleneck, but there's lots of bottlenecks. And the second thing is they should be the bottleneck.

John: But they should be a managed bottleneck and not, not a random bottleneck. Let me tell this story and then I want to come back to that, which is the other place where I see bottlenecks form in legal workflows is actually with the clients because we're not always good about recognizing that the client is both the customer of the overall process…

Clarke: And the performer.

John: But also a member of the project team.

Clarke: That's very good.

John: And actually, you know, if we were going to build a Lean SIPOC chart, they are the supplier for a lot of the key information that's needed in order for the legal work to move forward. I've had incredible success with teams when we start actively managing the client as a supplier and not as a customer.

Clarke: That's such a good idea. And so many things, but so many businesses are quite passive around that. They think it's beyond their control. And they don't have absolute control, but they have a lot more influence.

John: Yes.

Clarke: A lot of influence. And when they realize that, they can just speed everything up. I like that. That's really clever.

John: And also in a world where demand is strong, if you throw some resources at managing your client as a supplier and they don't respond, then actually your best economic move is to say, well, I'm sorry, we obviously aren't the right law firm for you. We wish you luck. We're going to go take the next person.

So, coming back to this idea, I mentioned this to you before we turned on the recorder, I will say it again, which is I had spent a lot of time looking at bottleneck theory and reading Goldratt and trying to understand Drum-Buffer-Rope and things. And I think it's both amazing work, but sometimes a little bit dense.

And I love how you've been able to distill it down and make it a little bit more approachable. But the big thing, aside from all of that, that you have taught me, and I think countless other people, is that the most amazing thing about bottlenecks is you can actually put them where you want them to be instead of merely responding and reacting to where they naturally want to form.

Clarke: Let's say there are three options on how you can handle bottlenecks. And the first one is be totally oblivious to them. It's ignorance of something that's really not obvious. Bottlenecks are not obvious until they're obvious. And then when they're obvious, you walk through every coffee shop in the world and you go, bottleneck, bottleneck. And you know

what they need to do. But those clients, difficult clients, you can't really do much about some of them. So other people's bottlenecks, that's their problem.

But the first scenario is ignorance of bottlenecks. The second one is kind of like bottleneck theory 101, or actually even 201, 301, 401, which is you find the bottleneck, you manage it, you exploit it, you subordinate it, or you optimize it. You do my three Cs, coordinate, collaborate, curate, whatever, and you take that bottleneck. And then over time, you watch it grow and then you're looking ahead trying to figure out where the bottleneck's going to move to. That's good. That actually often, that's what you need to do when you first come in, you go, okay, we're in a rescue situation here.

Let's just find the bottleneck and let's just get some money in here so that we can then move from this scarcity kind of mode into abundance with a bit more money and start thinking more strategically, which is the third version, which is the strategic view, which is you go, I know I've got a bottleneck somewhere here. Where do I want it to be? I'm going to choose my bottleneck. And I'm going to sit down and I'm going to think about this and I'm going to come up with a plan. And obviously, I'm going to have to tackle the current bottleneck. So I'm going to have to find that still.

But if I was just looking and just going, I'm going to find the current bottleneck and do scenario two and just do, I might be really clever about things and I might do the, what we love in TOC is before we spend money, we like to think and we like to do clever stuff. But if I'm in the strategic thing, I'm going, I don't want my bottleneck there because of lack of a receptionist. I'm going to hire another receptionist. I'm going to chuck some money at it because that's just a stupid place to have a bottleneck and we choose.

Let's say it was a hospital. I've got surgery there. I've got doctors. I've got all of them there. But for some reason, the lifts [aren't] working for whatever reason very efficiently. I'm going to chuck some money at that probably and

do some clever stuff and just choose that I don't want the lifts to be my bottleneck. It would be like having the car parking in an airport being the bottleneck and everyone was missing their flights and they had to stop selling so many flights because they've got this runway that can service more flights but the car park or the departure lounge bathrooms can't cope with the number of people.

John: Right. I want to use that actually to jump into your latest book, which is *The Speed Book*. And I'm just going to describe it at risk of creating a spoiler, but you talk in the beginning of the book about the literal movie, *Speed*, and how the whole sort of plot point and you and I, I think are both sort of solid Gen X-ers, so *Speed* is very much in our wheelhouse. But for anyone that's younger that maybe didn't see it, the whole thing is that there's a bomb on the bus that will explode if the bus drops below 50 miles an hour.

And the drama in the movie comes from how difficult it is to maintain that speed in the environment that is the typical city roadways. And so there's lots of big crash-ups and there's lots of near tipping over of the bus and all these other things that are very dramatic to watch on screen. But the point I think you're making, and I'll let you make it, is it's the environment that's the problem. The bus is perfectly capable of driving 50 miles an hour.

Clarke: It's just you can't do it through the middle of a busy city that's full of traffic lights that are slowing things down and is designed to keep people going 20 or 30 miles an hour. You've got to change the environment around it. There's two attitudes that are really closely related to that. One is the bus can go 50 miles an hour, or we have got this many staff, we can go this fast.

And so we've got to keep people busy. We've got to keep them utilized. But buses don't work like that. They sit and they wait for passengers and they stick to a timetable. Having them race through cities is ridiculous. The other is that kind of brutal force, command and control mentality that some

leaders have of we're going to put a bomb on the bus to make the bus go faster. So many ways to make the bus go faster.

John: And to draw the corollary back to legal for a minute, I'm not shy. I have mixed feelings about the billable hour as a revenue collection or a pricing model. I am far less shy about saying that I think that billable hours targets for managing workers are a terrible idea. And it's the equivalent of putting the bomb on the bus to your point, right?

So when you tell your workers that you have to be generating whatever the number is, somewhere between 1400 and 2200 billable hours a year in order to whatever, win points in the game of law firm, then you're incentivizing certain behaviors that are going to cause the bus to start crashing around into things as it navigates through the city.

Clarke: Or even just as bad or worse, they end up effectively going 50 miles an hour round and around the airport, like at the end, and they're just keeping the speed up. And it's all to keep the speed up, just round and round in circles, pointlessly going around and around in circles while the fuel tank is running out.

John: And so then, in a world where, bringing it all the way back to either I'm the bottleneck or my key resources, right? The experienced attorneys who are capable of producing reasonably good quality legal work on a consistent basis. The main purpose of a law firm, a law practice, is to utilize them not necessarily as totally as possible, but as effectively as possible.

Clarke: Sustainably.

John: And sustain, yeah, for sure. Yes, which is literally in the intro to every podcast episode that I release, it talks about sustainability. And so in terms of *The Speed Book*, because you talk about, in order to create effective systems, it's not always about adding more horsepower to the machine. And it's funny, as I say that out loud, I literally have had a client in the past

that is an older attorney whose go-to phrase is, we just got to get more horses in the barn.

And I understand the inclination, but I think from a consultant standpoint and a coaching standpoint, I'm looking at it and saying, yeah, but you're trying to drive this barn through a windstorm. More horses in the barn, right? It's a terrible metaphor.

Clarke: That's lovely.

John: But I actually want to come back for a minute because at least a lot of the firms that I work with tend to be smaller organizations in terms of total number of people, the resources are constrained, which means that it's not uncommon for resources to be wearing multiple hats.

This is me riffing off of your hourglass or egg timer metaphor. I think that for a lot of these businesses, yes, they may be an egg timer, but there's lots of different types of sand in the top and some of it is more valuable than others. There's actually an exercise in terms of figuring out in that upper bulb, the things that are upstream of the bottleneck, how do we make sure that the right types of work are getting to the bottleneck, but maybe the other types of work are being pushed.

Clarke: If you think of the focus formula, a lot of it is around curation. Curation is really good for figuring out who you work with. It's what sand is in there. And, but then you've also got to think about what staff are around there to support. Just imagine a different business where you had one key skill, like a lawyer, but they had a sales department.

And the sales department is going, oh, they're going to run out of sand. And rather than sitting and going, oh, okay, we've got to find some really valuable sand, they go, they're running out of sand. We've got to keep the sand at the top of the egg timer. So they go out and they put low value sand in, which keeps the lawyer or the electrician or the surgeon…

John: Yes, you're literally describing a lot of legal marketing agencies, which I think are a little notorious for generating a quantity of leads, but not necessarily a quality of them. And it's not uncommon in a small system for that lawyer to say, I'm spending so much time filtering out these poor-quality leads that it's actually jeopardizing my delivery pipeline.

Clarke: What's really important is that people have a list. They have a what list and a what not list. This is one of the most powerful things I can tell you, anyone to do. List out what you do and what you don't do. And the what nots, that's what we don't do. And of those two lists, the what nots is the most important. It's far easier to filter out by saying what you don't do than trying to figure out what you do.

John: There's two things that come to mind in terms of things that I talk about a lot and have talked about on this podcast. One, I mentioned to you before we turned on the recorder, but I talk all the time about the need for an honest reckoning with capacity. And that's understanding what my capabilities are, both in terms of time and energy, but also skillset and interest and all the rest. I often say the flip side of that coin is what I refer to as the brutal assessment of priority. It's brutal because…

Clarke: Oh I like your play with words. Brilliant.

John: Yeah, I think you and I are kindred spirits in that way, but it's brutal because we don't like to say no to things. We like to be pleasers. But that brutal assessment is incredibly valuable and it can be done in lots of different framings, right?

So it can be done at a micro level in terms of how am I going to plan my day. It can be done at a strategic level in terms of, and I think most lawyers in law practices would say, if you specialize in family law, then you probably shouldn't take a traffic ticket case. And we instinctively do it in certain areas, but then I don't think we take it quite far enough sometimes.

Clarke: No. If you look at us, we've got a Venn diagram, both of us here, in our branding. So I got, I guess, software development, modern software development, and the theory of constraints. So the bottleneck stuff. So that's my name, the bottleneck guy, and all of my stuff is in there. Interesting thing about that that as a business is that describes my bullseye. But I get other people come because they go, oh, actually, it's just the same. Your stuff applies here. But that's where I'm special.

You've got Agile and attorneys. And every single business has some form of that. And niching down, finding the right niche, finding that right bullseye, it actually starts by saying what not. This is what I do not do. The surprising thing is, I've actually just to reframe that for myself, because I've realized that I'm, have had manufacturing people come to me or even non-software people is probably a fairer way of doing it.

And I've found that as a business, what's been really helpful for me is that I have focused in on the thing I do the very best. But then I get these lovely side quests where I get to go off and talk to people that make parachutes. And it's just so fascinating and fun. I still earn a good living from both of those worlds.

But at the end of the day, I know this is probably obvious to every lawyer attorney that's actually listening to this. I have a Venn diagram here with probably law and then one other thing. But adding another bubble onto that, so that you even niche in further and you just become clearer about that. And maybe that other bubble is stuff I love. But then if you look at a Venn diagram and you zoom out, the what nots are all of the stuff that lives on the outside of it.

And most of us don't actually articulate that. But when we say it out loud, so for instance, if I said, I don't work with tobacco companies. And I don't, and none of them are ever going to contact me. But that would be a what not. It would be a fairly useless one to me because it's not relevant. But listing out and being really explicit and actually putting the words on paper or saying

them out loud, it's just the best way to give you clarity about what sits in the middle.

John: And I think that's the key, right, is having it actually become something more than a vague intention in your head and actually committing to it as an expression of some sort. There's so many things I would love to talk with you about, but you briefly passed over, I don't think lawyers have the notion of quality assurance, which is actually one of my giant pet peeves, because we do. We care so deeply about quality, but we don't have a very mature quality assurance function, especially relative to software and technology. We just don't have the systems built out.

And it creates an interesting thing. And in terms of, coming back to putting the bottleneck where you want it to be, in a lot of my work with senior attorneys, what I find is that they are often the chief sort of drafters of legal work product, but that's not actually where, in my vision, their best use is in terms of being the bottleneck. And where I actually encourage a lot of senior, experienced professionals to go is to get out of the business of the daily production work and into the very related functions of system design and quality assurance.

And that if I can take my most senior attorney that has knowledge and experience and skill, hard work, hard won over many years, and I can get them in a place where they're defining systems in a way that is a reasonably good attempt, and this will get better over time, at being able to express what quality looks like so that other people can follow that quality standard.

And then they put themselves as the bottleneck resource in the position of doing quality review against that standard. Then they can all of a sudden begin to scale the impact of their organization in ways that they never will be able to if they're the ones that's responsible for the delivery work. Now, the challenge there, and I've, I'll ask this as a question to you.

Clarke: I'm going to answer a different question, but ask it anyway.

John: You can, yeah, and hopefully we've got time for both because I think the challenge that I run into is that they're better at doing the quality assurance work on the fly than they are at actually defining the quality standards up front. And so the quality standard, very human, very natural, becomes, I know it when I see it. But then when they get work, they haven't been able to define up front, they get work that is not of sufficient quality. Now they have a conundrum because they either can push it back upstream for rework, but that feels very inefficient, or I can just do the work, in which case you might as well have done it yourself to begin with.

Clarke: How about I bounce off that? There's two bits that I think I need to mention here that there's a different Venn diagram now, but it's in *The Speed Book*. And it's with senior managers, leaders, experts. Just imagine a Venn diagram with three circles on it. Bottom left-hand corner is expertise. So you've just described there's a whole lot of expertise. And then there's the annoying bit on the bottom right-hand corner, which is management, which everyone has to do. So they've got to do both of those.

And then there's leadership. And leadership is almost always the one that gets sacrificed, because if you don't do the other two, everything grinds to a halt. We're moving up a level here when you move up to the top bubble on the Venn diagram, which is leadership, because that's where wisdom, quiet thinking, long-term thinking lives. And when you move up to wisdom, it's really tricky because so much of it's implicit. It's all of the stuff that you've learned. And to ask someone to make it explicit is really difficult. But it's not impossible.

And the beautiful thing is you don't have to do it all at once. Just think to that, you got to make space to do that, which is the hardest bit. But now, I'm going to move from that model. I think everyone needs to keep that in mind and ask themselves, where do they spend most of their time? Expertise, management, or leadership? And if they're in a senior role, when they

move to be wanting to do more leadership, that's where wisdom comes in, and you have to make space to be wise. You can't do wise just in parallel. Okay?

There's a second bit that we get confused. I hope I can untangle this for you. In software development, that used to be how we built software. And in all the Lean stuff, we used to build cars that way. And then they looked to go, oh, in Japan, they're different. They don't have people at the end of it inspecting, running around with rubber mallets, beating out the problems and finding all of the stuff and then fixing them. They figured out during their process how to build quality in. That was the big change.

John: Tighter, more iterative feedback loops.

Clarke: Yeah, and it goes back to if you think of the model with the hourglass, getting that fast feedback from the people who test is really important. But we used to do it all at the end, and a 12-month project would take two years, and the second half was fixing all the defects. So now, if you take it to what the lawyers are doing, you want to get closer to that, but it would be wonderful if you could sit down and systematize all of the testing.

But what you want is a way of getting the draft to be good enough, and then they run through. There's a lot of psychology. The lawyers are going, they've got a green pen and a red pen, and they're highlighting like a teacher, good, tick, tick, good, ah, red pen here. They're working with people, they're coaching and they're teaching so that the next brand new drafter is a little bit better, and you build it in.

John: Yeah, well.

Clarke: It’s a iterative cycle.

John: So you're helping me not to maybe toot my own horn for a minute. I'm literally working with a firm right now to improve their litigation drafting

process. And the thing that I have glommed onto that seems to be working, at least the early returns look good, is to be more intentional about building a strategy plan and having a strategy conversation up front, because that's basically a first iteration or first prototype of where things go.

And if that's a group conversation or a one-on-one conversation, then you can very rapidly iterate because you can do it in the course of a natural conversation. Then capture that artifact, right? Whatever it happens to be. And in today's world, you can record that conversation, you can use an AI tool to summarize it, to get you a very good version of a strategy draft. But then when it's time to go write a demand letter, write a legal pleading, write a motion, whatever it happens to be, you've already worked out a lot of the details.

And you're not necessarily getting to the perfect work product, but if it's the junior attorney or the paralegal that is doing the grunt work of the drafting, then the amount of review, because you've already agreed on the direction and the tenor, then the review of that work product becomes far simpler because it's now more about polishing than it is about framing.

Clarke: When you're writing anything, you're thinking. And if you do the first draft stuff, you're going to think of all of the details. The purpose in writing of a first draft is so that you can write a second draft. And with the stuff you're doing here, you can only write the second draft because the first one's help you figure out what it's about. That's the nature. We learn as we go, and we just want to make that smooth and natural.

It's one of the things that came out of Agile in the early days is that you figure out stuff as you build things, but you've got to be probably going in the right direction, but then you fill in the details as you go later on. And so long as you're flexible about filling in the details and you have a system that just goes, hey, it's inevitable, we are going to learn as we go on, then you don't have to get everything right up front. If you're planning a big new hotel and you're going to build it, you figure out the location first, and then you

figure out how high it can be based on whatever and all of that kind of stuff. You don't choose the color of the curtains on the 23rd floor bathroom.

John: Let me take one more stab, and I'm going to maybe tie back to a metaphor that you've brought on earlier, because I think one of the things that drew me to Agile for legal in the first place is that a lot of legal processes are inherently about learning over time, right? We literally in litigation have a discovery process that is about learning what the facts of this case are.

And I think similar to how you can put a bottleneck where you want it to be, you don't have to take the learning as it comes. You can make specific plans for what learning you want to achieve. You can be intentional about designing different iterations of your process to maximize certain types of learning so that you then are in the best position to make a decision about the scope or the tenor of the next phase of the work.

Clarke: That makes really good sense. And if you were thinking of building say a software system, which I know is, actually I'm really remote from the actual details of that these days, but you start out again with there are things that you need to know early and there are things that you can leave till later. For the hotel, you need, where are you going to build this thing? Is there a market for it? There are things in the early stages that if you get them wrong, they're really expensive.

And in the early stages, it's largely about removing uncertainty and risk. And then in the later stages, you fill in the details later. So progressive discovery, you don't have to discover everything up front and figuring out often from an uncertainty and risk point of view at the beginning, think of the what nots again, the whats and the what nots. The whats are what you're trying to get to. Those are the facts. But the what nots in this case, they're not the things that you should ignore. They're the things that are going to be risky or uncertain.

And you want to go delve into those early on to make sure that you don't miss them. The end result of actually getting everything concrete down isn't nearly as important. I presume, I don't mean, I don't know your world, but in anything where you're discovering stuff, it's getting the gist and the general direction, but reducing the uncertainty on the things that might come back and kill you later on.

John: Yeah, there's any number of ways that we can prioritize because there are certain things that could actually be quote unquote showstoppers in a legal matter and depending on your posture in the case, a showstopper might be a good thing for your client, right? You want to stop the show and so you can prioritize looking for…

Clarke: Oh that's really clever, yeah.

John: You know, smoking guns, whatever you want to call them. But putting a certain amount of effort towards uncovering some of those big rocks early, because if they exist, that might send the whole thing in a different direction.

Clarke: I'm not sure. I suspect there's this kind of like completeness syndrome that many of us have, which is we want to get everything and all of the details sorted out up front. And when we've got all the details sorted out up front, all our anxieties go away because it's clear, we've got it documented, it's neat, it's tidy. But if your job is to reduce the anxiety or to find the showstoppers, then early on, you do different things and then over time, you get the details sorted.

John: I think that's one of the things that the more experienced litigators figure out over the course of their careers, right? I think coming out of law school, you have a tendency towards completeness because completeness is what you're graded on. Once you get into the world of practice and you've got clients pressuring you for why is this bill so high or how come

you can't get me out of this, then the quest for showstoppers becomes a higher priority.

Clarke: That's part of wisdom is knowing how to not have to get everything right, nailed down up front.

John: Clarke, thank you so much for coming back. It's funny, we didn't even get to the topic that I originally reached back out to you that I wanted to discuss. If you're willing, I would love to have you back yet another time in the not-too-distant future.

Clarke: I presume that's the cognitive crash stuff.

John: It’s the cognitive crash. Yes. Yes, this new world and as I said, I have a different episode that I'm doing that is related to this that I'll get out. But I think your perspective on it is a really good one, so I'd love to get you back.

Clarke: Okay, yeah that’d be really cool.

John: A quick note before we wrap up. I've talked about this before, but one of the great benefits of using a Kanban board in your law practice, like the one we have in GreenLine, is that it makes your bottlenecks easy to spot. And it's actually one of the things we help our customers with as part of our onboarding process.

We want to get your matters up on the board as quickly as possible, usually within the first week, and typically we can import them straight from your existing practice management tool. So there's not a lot of data entry. And from there, we can easily see where work is getting stuck in your system and we'll help you design process steps to get the cases flowing again.

And where GreenLine really shines is the tool set we have available to establish and protect your flow. Concurrent work limits or WIP limits, intuitive communication tools that get you out of email, and visual signals that make it obvious which matters need attention and which ones can chill

out for a moment. To learn more, head on over to greenline.legal and hit that book a demo button. We'd love to talk about your practice and show you how GreenLine can help.

All right, that's it for today. If this discussion resonated with you, be sure to go back and listen to my first conversation with Clarke in episode 39, titled Productive With Dollar Signs. It goes deeper on the fundamentals of bottleneck theory and it introduces the idea that your job isn't to keep your team busy, their job is to keep you productive. It's my most listened to episode for a reason.

If you found today's discussion useful, please share it with a friend or a colleague who you think would benefit from a more Agile approach to their legal practice, or if you even wanted to blast it to your social media feed, I wouldn't try to stop you.

And if you have topics you'd like to hear me discuss, including any questions you might have for Clarke on his next visit, don't hesitate to shoot me an email at john.grant@greenline.legal.

As always, this podcast gets production support from the fantastic team at Digital Freedom Productions, and our theme music is “Hello” by Lunareh. Thanks for listening, and I will catch you again next week.