



OBEYA
association

TRANSFORMING RISK INTO A HIGH- PERFORMANCE DECISION SYSTEM



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REBUILDING A RISK FUNCTION FROM THE INSIDE OUT: HOW A DEEP TRANSFORMATION IN A GLOBAL LAW FIRM DELIVERED 85% SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT.

Standing on Obeya principles, this is the story of how a 50-person team transformed their decision system through organizational redesign, the right people, and the daily work of seeing it through.

This case study documents the deep transformation of a 50-person Risk & Compliance team in a leading global law firm, responsible for AML/KYC and conflict approvals across 25+ offices. In four months, core decision lead time fell from 8-10 days to same-day decisions, and held through year-end peak.

An earlier round of structural fixes (such as team splits, automation, daily reporting) had moved the KPI from 10 to ~6 days and then stalled. What broke the plateau wasn't another optimization. It was a deep redesign of how the function worked, top to bottom: empowered leadership at the team level, the right people placed where they could shape what happened, a shared digital cockpit with three layers and daily updates, and the daily rhythm of seeing it through.

Over 90% of the team stayed in place. The change worked because it was done with the people, not to them. The reader will see how Obeya principles worked in a place they're rarely seen, and what made the system last beyond the transformation itself.



TOMÁŠ BÖHM

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Tomáš Böhm led this transformation as Transformation Lead and subsequently as interim Risk Lead, taking direct accountability for results and the authority to act. His work combines organizational redesign with the practical use of visual management. He believes Obeya works best when it's not a method imposed on people, but a way for people to finally see, and own, the system they're already in.

This report contributes to that ambition by documenting Obeya as a visual management system - making complexity visible, supporting collective sense-making, and strengthening alignment and decision-making across contexts.

COMPANY/CASE PROFILE



Global Leading Law Firm - Europe Region

- Legal services
- ca 400 Partners, 3000 employees
- Global matrix: partnership structure with regional and practice-area dimensions
- 25+ offices across European Region

Risk & Compliance is the gatekeeper for new client work. Every potential new matter, a deal, a dispute, an advisory engagement, must pass an AML/KYC and conflict-of-interest check before lawyers can begin.

Each request reaches the team as a submission. The headline KPI was pick-up time: the days between a submission arriving and an analyst conducting an initial analysis. For years it had hovered between 8 and 10 days.

Volumes were high and diverse, from M&A to litigation to real estate, each with its own complexity. Lawyers grew frustrated. Trust eroded. The team itself felt overloaded and disconnected.



~400 partners
~3 000 employees



25+ offices across
European Region



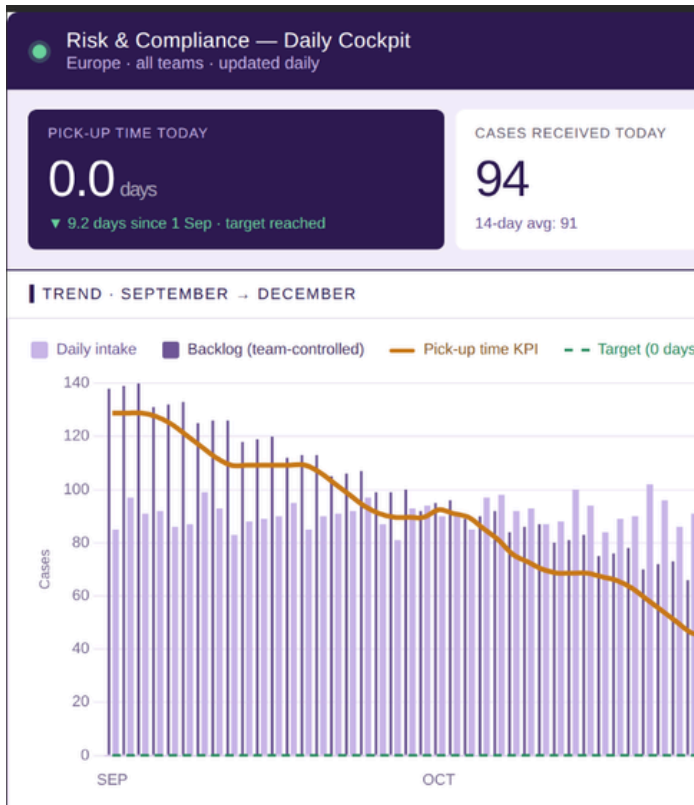
High volume ~80-100
submissions per day



30 areas of law

OBEYA PROFILE

"Built with the team, not on them. With shared vision, honest dialogue, and decisions we were ready to stand behind."



- **Implemented:** Sept to Dec 2023
- **Type:** Digital cockpit on SharePoint, daily data feed
- **Purpose:** Daily decision management + performance transparency to leadership
- **USP:** Three-layer drill-down (region → team → analyst) + ownership pattern
- **Position:** Cross-functional - Risk team, leadership, and firm executives share the same view
- **Reach:** Europe Risk & Compliance
- **Users:** 50 analysts · 6 team leaders · 2 risk managers · transformation lead · firm leadership
- **Rhythm:** Daily team standup · weekly leadership review · daily report every morning
- **Access:** Open to all Risk staff and leadership



Implemented since

Reset began Sept 2023. Cockpit live Oct. Target reached Dec 2023.



Purpose & Scope

Make daily decision reality visible to team, leadership, and the business => same view, same time.



Type

Digital cockpit on SharePoint, daily data feed. One source of truth => the shared reality for the team and leadership.

URGENCY & RATIONALE

Objectives

- **Restore performance:** sustainable same-day decisions, not just a one-time fix
- **Rebuild trust:** reposition Risk from a perceived blocker into a true decision partner to the business
- **Strengthen the sense of ownership for results:** empower people from inside, with real ownership and authority
- **Build a system that lasts:** principles, structure, and a way of working that outlive the transformation itself



Trigger

The decision to go deeper came in September. An earlier round of structural fixes had moved pick-up time from 10 to ~6 days and then stalled. The team was still frustrated. Partners still dissatisfied. Year-end peak was approaching with no path to recovery.

The next logical step would have been more of the same: more people, more automation, more control. But it became clear that the system itself needed redesigning. Optimization alone wasn't going to deliver what the firm, and the team, needed.

Context

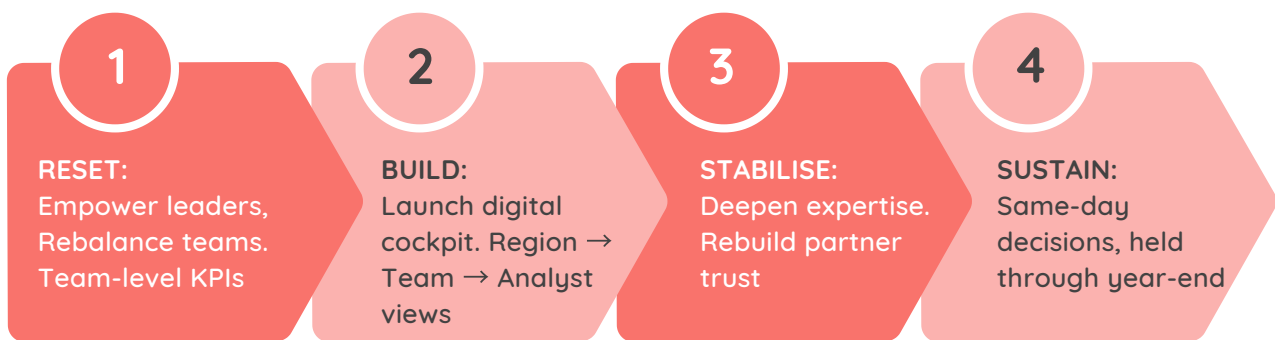
Risk & Compliance was the quiet pressure point of the firm. Every new piece of client work needed approval before lawyers could begin. The function carried a constant tension: deliver fast enough for partners to start work, while remaining the firm's key line of defence against regulatory and reputational risk. For years, those two imperatives had pulled in opposite directions, and Risk's role became misunderstood across the firm.

DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

- **Design approach:** Iterative and participatory. Built with team leaders and analysts, not imposed.
- **Stakeholders:** Top management as sponsors. Transformation lead as owner. Team leaders as co-designers and performance drivers. Global Risk as ongoing partner.
- **Change approach:** Clear public direction. Empowered team-level leadership. Visible daily reality & firm-wide communication

The redesign rested on six interlocking moves: leadership as ownership, team rebalancing, top-down sponsorship, joint process redesign with global Risk, the shared cockpit, and deeper expertise per area of law.

What changed the trajectory wasn't a single move. It was their alignment. Direction became unambiguous. Authority moved where it could act. The cockpit gave everyone the same picture.



Challenges

Barriers: Uncertainty after a first attempt that produced only marginal gains. Entrenched habits of analysts choosing the cases they liked best. Team leaders without real authority. Year-end peak approaching with no buffer.

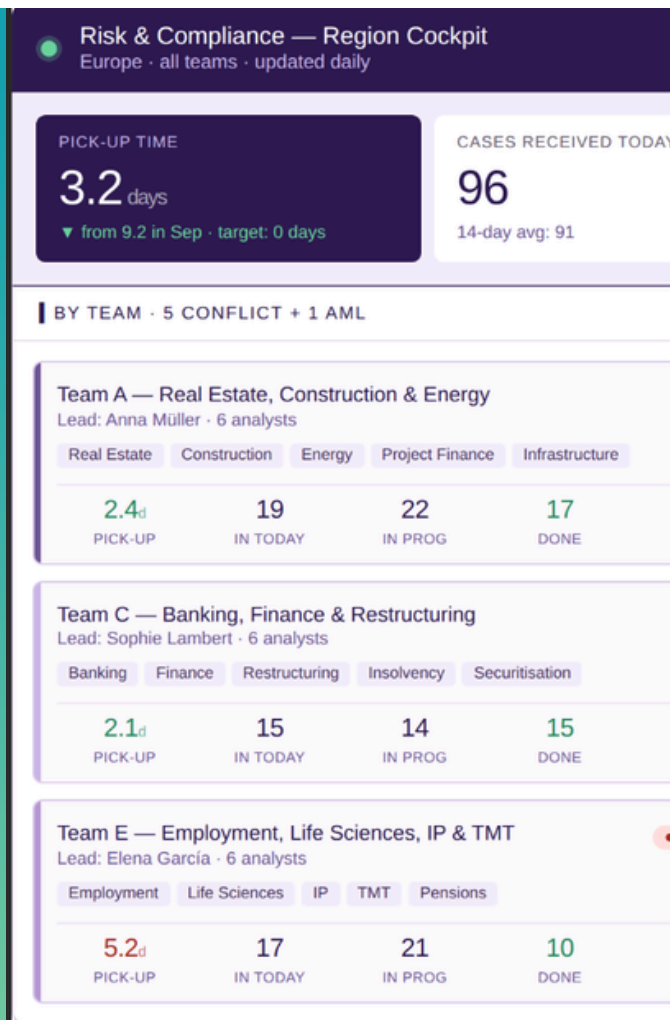
Resistance: Some long-tenured team members were uncomfortable with team-level KPIs and visible workload. Promoting people based on mindset rather than tenure required persistence and political capital.

Enablers

The biggest enabler was clear accountability for results, putting the right people in places where they could shape what happened in their teams. It took trust, instinct, and the willingness to make non-traditional decisions.

Top management's commitment, real authority for team leaders, and a cockpit that replaced opinions with observations made it possible.

LAYOUT, STRUCTURE & ARCHITECTURE



Digital cockpit for cross-country visibility

- **Setup:** A digital Obeya cockpit that lives on SharePoint, accessible from any office or device
- **Architecture:** Three-layer drill-down: Region → Team → Analyst. Anyone could click down to the underlying reality
- **Integration:** Layered on top of the firm's central Risk software. Same data, structured operating reality

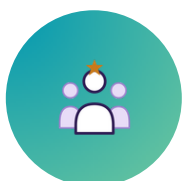
The cockpit became the anchor of daily standups, weekly reviews, and partner conversations across the region.



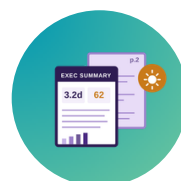
Region cockpit
Six teams at a glance.
One single dashboard as a source of truth for all.



Analyst view
Personal flow and open caseload.



Team view
Deep dive into areas of law, analysts performance, or incoming requests.



Daily two-pager
Executive summary + team detail. Sent to leadership every morning as a shared rhythm.

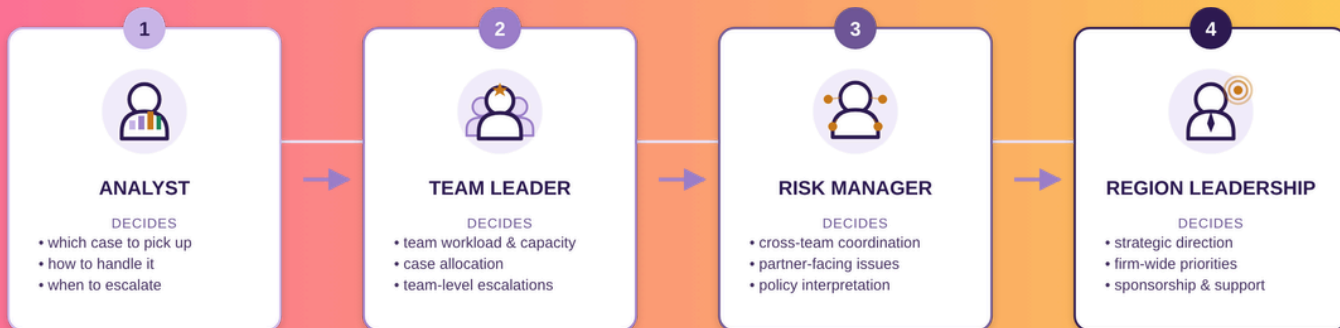
USE IN PRACTICE



MEETING RHYTHM

- **Cadence:** Daily 30min virtual standup at the cockpit. Weekly team and leadership review. Daily two-page report sent every morning.
- **Anchor:** Discussions are anchored in what the cockpit shows, factual, straight to the point.
- **Evolution:** Team view from day one. Expertise breakdown added next. Analyst detail emerged gradually as trust grew.

DECISION-MAKING FLOW



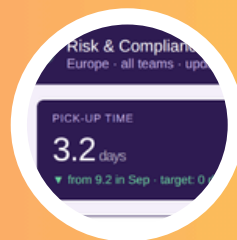
ANALYST

Opens personal view every morning. Self-assigns cases visible to the team.



TEAM LEADER

Runs the daily standup at the team view. Coaches on ownership patterns.

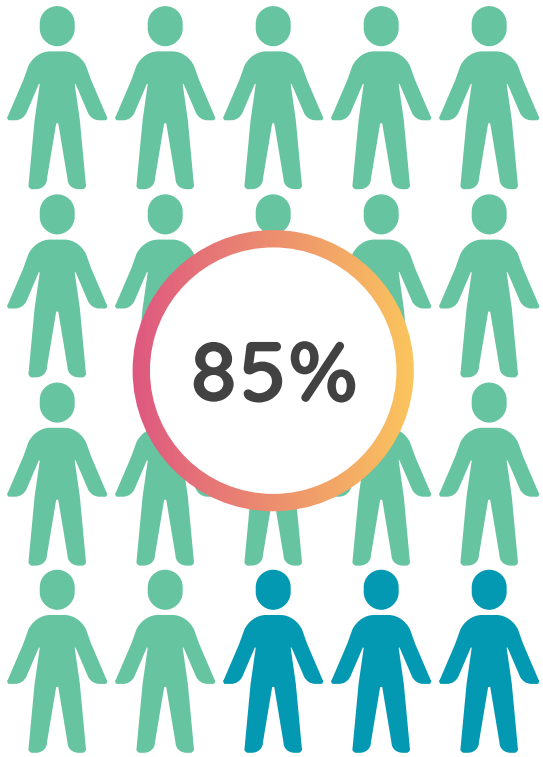


RISK & REGION LEADERSHIP

Uses the daily two-pager. Reviews trends weekly with the cockpit.

OUTCOMES & VALUE (ROI)

Sustained reduction in pick-up time by 85% over four months => the days between a case submission and an analyst starting work. The team's core KPI, watched daily by partners and leadership.



- **Tangible:** Pick-up time 8-10d → 0d (same-day decisions), with steady monthly progress: 9.2d → 2.8d → 0.6d → 0d (Sep-Dec).
- **Intangible:** Risk repositioned from “blocker” to “decision partner”. Team-level ownership replaced selected case-picking. Inter-team support emerged naturally.
- **People:** Over 90% of the team retained. Use case backlog reduced from ~142 to ~38 cases.
- **ROI:** 85% improvement on growing volume, no headcount increase. Europe redesign became the basis for a global proposal.



The story didn't end in December.

The team continued. Volumes grew. The cockpit kept working. What was built was not a one-time fix but a way of working: clear direction, real ownership, daily visibility, leadership rhythm.

The transformation was completed. The system stayed and continued to work well.

RISKS, THREATS & CONTINUITY

- **Threats:** Leadership or direction change. Return to individual-level KPIs. Lack of patience to deliver results.
- **Hazards experienced:** Risk of overloading newly empowered team leaders. Dependency on a few cultural anchors. Visibility felt uncomfortable at first, being seen takes getting used to.
- **Future outlook:** Europe redesign now basis for a global process redesign. Cockpit principles designed to be replicable to other regions and gatekeeper functions.

Leadership backed the change, but results had to come. The biggest risk was that they wouldn't.

Without visible improvements that partners could feel, leadership conviction would have shifted, and the political backing that made the change possible would have followed.

Scaling beyond Europe

Sustaining performance through the busiest period proved the system. The Europe redesign then became the working blueprint for a global Risk redesign: same KPIs, same cockpit structure, same organization set-up.

Beyond Risk, the same approach holds promise for any function where speed and judgment have to coexist under pressure.



Team retained

Over 90% of the original team stayed. The change worked because it was done with the people, not to them.

Improvement sustained

85%

Held through year-end peak. The highest-volume period of the firm's year. Not a spike. A new baseline.