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Lawyers are not widgets

In [Legal process outsourcing](#) on **April 25, 2010** at **9:04 pm**

Legal process outsourcing is all the rage these days. Law firms faced with increasing pressure from their clientele to stop charging outrageous fees are often turning to legal process outsourcing companies who farm out document review and other work to unidentified, but reportedly well-trained, minions across the globe. Law firms who use LPO companies in an effort to make a cheaper widget so they can compete in the market for their services on price point are entirely missing the point.

Any law firm that outsources legal work offshore has forgotten what it means to be a lawyer.

Lawyers are not widgets – “something unspecified whose name is either forgotten or not known” (wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn) — and for that matter, neither are paralegals or other support staff. Each legal professional comes with his or her own unique set of strengths and abilities. A genius at contract negotiation may quake in her boots at the prospect of appearing in court. A phenom in courtroom advocacy may have poor deposition skills. A meticulous patent prosecution paralegal may be utterly lost in a fast-paced litigation practice.

Legal advice and services should be personalized and unique, whether the client is an individual consumer or a Fortune 500 company. Providing that specialized and individualized service should be the priority of law firms, not maximizing their markup on billable hour widgets.

However, the concept of a lawyer being a counselor and advisor has for too long been replaced by the big business model law firm with more and more levels of minions cranking out billable hour widgets that make the partners of mega-law firms millionaires. What portion of this business model assists the client? None of it. No client, not even huge corporations, need a thousand lawyers!

Can outsourcing of any legal work be of benefit to either law firm or client then? Absolutely, when both the prism of law firm structure and client selection of law firms is adjusted. Focus on individual skills and abilities rather than looking for a one-size-fits-all firm or lawyer. Do you need high quality legal research memos? Develop a relationship with a local freelance attorney with excellent writing skills. Do you need a highly organized paralegal to help you prepare for a trial? Contract with a local freelance paralegal that has familiarity with the necessary office and document management systems and trial preparation experience to help you out.

Lawyer or widget – which is it going to be?

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FreelanceLaw, Inc. was founded by San Diego attorney Melody A. Kramer to connect law firms and inhouse legal counsel with qualified freelance attorneys, paralegals, court reporters, interpreters, and other professionals. FreelanceLaw's database of over 1,100 freelancers is accessible 24/7 to registered law firms and is more efficient and cost-effective than ... [Continue reading »](#)

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