



In-house law departments (and law firms) rely more on project attorneys/contract attorneys

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6 July 2010 — There is an interesting article in today’s *The Legal Intelligencer* about the increasing use of using “project attorneys” and “contract attorneys” to handle an increased workload on shrinking budgets. Bringing on specialized, experienced attorneys for six months to a year to handle one set project in their area of expertise has become the solution. For the full article [click here](#).

This is trend we recently posted about ([click here](#)) and that have reported on extensively in the past year (see for example [here](#)) and that we discussed in detail at the Georgetown Law conference “Law Firm Evolution” ([click here](#)). It is what pundits in the industry call the “decomposition of legal tasks” into component parts that can be delegated to various sources — in-sourcing, relocating, offshoring, outsourcing, subcontracting — and it has had its biggest effect on contract attorneys who are a large part of our membership base. But the trend is substantive legal work and not the highly structured/repetitive functions such as document review, research tasks and processing that most contract/project attorneys fit into.

And it is the reason that our job posts for substantive temporary legal work has increased dramatically. And we have also seen it in straight document review projects where law firms and corporations have asked for the requisite substantive experience to work on a project. The *Legal Intelligencer* quotes James LaRosa of JuriStaff (a large player who places a lot of attorneys with relevant experience/real life practice experience in temporary substantive positions) but subscribers to The Posse List job lists know that other major players include

Adecco (who we recently covered [here](#)) CPA Global, Firm Advice, Legal Placements, Lumen Legal and Pat Taylor. (To subscribe to our job lists [click here](#). It's free).

It is not surprising there is a lot of activity on the corporate contract side. Corporations really started the project attorney/contract attorney legal process outsourcing industry in the early 1990s (my first temp project was directly for Dupont in 1991 on a product liability case) and was pioneered by companies like Dow Chemical, Dupont, GE, IBM, Pfizer, etc. — companies that had a raft of product liability litigation. And they — naturally — pioneered offshoring. Law firms joined in like gangbusters and since the industry sort of came of age through law firms in the late 1990s that's what most of today's contract attorneys mark it — law firms as the forerunner.

But it is the corporation that has seized the need to reduce the outside legal spend by using temporary attorneys in house more and more for valuable use such as contract review, legal research and analysis, merger and acquisition due diligence work, drafting agreements, as well as the standard electronic discovery requests. That is the shift we are seeing.

Gregory P. Bufithis is the founder and chairman of The Posse List and its sister sites The Electronic Discovery Reading Room (<http://www.ediscoveryreadingroom.com>) and The Posse Ranch (www.theposseranch.com). He is also founder and chairman of Project Counsel (www.projectcounsel.com).