

# National Association of Freelance Legal Professionals

NAFLP is a nationwide community of freelance attorneys, paralegals, court reporters, interpreters & other freelance legal professionals. NAFLP was created to assist freelancers in optimizing the financial and personal success of their businesses, as well as to raise the profile of freelancing as a career choice that can optimize work-life balance. We are eager to share our experiences and hear what you have to say. Melody Kramer & Amanda Mineer Co-Founders, NAFLP

Thursday, July 3, 2008

## ✚ "Pedigree" vs. "Quality" - stereotypes continue to plague the legal and corporate world

Ashby Jones at the Wall Street Journal Law Blog has reported about one example of inroads that an innovative law firm has made into well-known large corporations such as Morgan Stanley, Credit Suisse Group, Cisco, General Electric, Google, and Xerox. ["New Comer Law Firms are Creating Niches with Blue Chip Clients"](#)

"The legal industry isn't known for innovation. But a few upstarts have come up with a business model that challenges the tight grip big law firms hold on corporate business. This new breed of firms is landing blue-chip clients and, in the process, making money."

The article features [Axiom Global, Inc.](#) and discusses how they charge corporate clients less by using more virtual practices, usually having their attorneys work at the client's offices, and use of a flexible staffing model. At least one of the obstacles that they are facing is equally applicable to legal freelancers - perception of quality of attorneys.

"Axiom will have to continue to persuade the change-resistant legal world that its lawyers are good. 'I was skeptical at first,' says Xerox's Mr. Liu. 'I

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### FINDING FREEDOM

Working as a Freelance Legal Professional!

Live Event

August 12, 2008 11-2pm

San Diego, CA

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- Tax Planning For The Freelance Legal Professional Teleclass, with Jere Battan, June 20, 2008
- Freelance Freedom: How to Get Started as a Contract Lawyer, with Lisa Solomon - May 22, 2008



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had to get over a fear that they weren't going to be as committed to the job or to the work as a permanent person.' "

Axiom's solution to this obstacle, however, smacks of the same snobbery that has caused big law firms hold on corporate business practice in the first place - "pedigree" over skill.

"Perhaps the biggest obstacle to Axiom's growth plans: a lack of lawyers who fit its bill: pedigreed and law-firm-trained lawyers ready to jump off the traditional track. 'It's our biggest hurdle right now,' says Mr. Harris [a founder of Axiom], who adds that for every 100 lawyers who apply for employment at Axiom, the company hires one."

"[I]t isn't a problem that seems to be causing Mr. Harris sleepless nights. 'Law firms are likely to continue making lawyers unhappy for years to come,' he says."

This may be a shock to the corporate world, but neither "pedigree" nor big law firm experience provides any reliable indicia of quality of legal services. Freelancers, go out and show corporate America how good you are!

Posted by Melody Kramer at [6:22 AM](#)  

Labels: [Ashby Jones](#), [Axiom Global Inc.](#), [Cisco](#), [contract attorneys](#), [contract lawyers](#), [Credit Suisse Group](#), [General Electric](#), [Google](#), [Morgan Stanley](#), [Wall Street Journal Law Blog](#), [Xerox](#)

## 2 comments:

 Anonymous said...


This blog highlights a mindset in the legal market which consistently causes larger corporations to be exorbitant premiums for legal services of questionable quality. In particular, the observation that "pedigree"

and large firm experience are not reliable indicia of quality touches on a demonstrable fact that is largely ignored by the legal market...

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The fact that at most large law firms, in the first several years of practice, the only experience that associates receive is doing work that could be handled by a competent paralegal or secretary. Moreover, in large firms, the billable hour and marketing requirements generally mean that the amount of quality mentorship conducted between senior attorneys and those highly compensated young lawyers who are mostly engaged in doing the work of a clerk typist is minimal.

By contrast, in a small firm environment, the working relationship between partners and associates tends to be very close, with ample opportunity for supervision and mentoring. Further, opportunities for all manner of legal tasks come to associates much more quickly. The natural consequence is that after six years of practice, an attorney whose lack of pedigree limited her options to small firms is likely to be a much more polished professional with significant amounts of meaningful experience in the actual practice of law. By comparison, after six years in a megafirm, the associate is likely to be paranoid, jittery and harried from the toxic work environment, while having very little meaningful experience in the actual practice of law.

July 3, 2008 9:48 AM 

 [JDWired](#) said...


Right on point. While off-shoring has cost jobs, there is a silver lining -- clients can now see that the word "pedigree" is much more appropriate for dog shows and horse races.


July 3, 2008 12:33 PM 

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### *What is a freelance legal professional?*

*A freelance legal professional is an attorney, paralegal, interpreter, court reporter, or other professional that provides services to attorneys or law firms on a non-employee/independent contractor basis. Other terms commonly used are contract attorneys, appearance attorneys, contract paralegals, etc.*



### Contributors

 [Melody Kramer](#)