

RESOURCE GUIDE

CONTRACT ATTORNEYS PROVIDE SOLUTION TO MULTITUDE OF LAW FIRM NEEDS

By Werner S. Lewin, Jr., Esq.

As we enter the Twenty-First Century, law firm engagement of the part-time assistance of seasoned contract attorneys has become widely accepted in the greater San Francisco Bay Area and is quickly catching on elsewhere.

What began as a mere means of filling in for an attorney that had taken ill or gone on vacation or maternity leave, has grown into an effective means of responding to a multitude of needs.

Small and large firms, sole practitioners and in house corporate legal departments, have found the ability to secure the prompt, professionally-selected assistance of one or more appropriately-skilled contract attorneys invaluable.

The increasing use of contract attorneys can be directly associated with the discovery of the numerous ways that contract attorneys can assist a busy law office, not to mention the multiple benefits of doing so.

Today, law firms and in house corporate legal departments engage contract attorneys to do virtually everything that attorneys do. Covering court and deposition appearances, handling legal research and writing of briefs, drafting motions and contracts and preparing a case for trial, are just a few of the many things that firms are engaging contract attorneys to handle.

Many firms use more than one contract attorney to handle different projects, recognizing that the skills, background and expertise needed to handle one project are not always appropriate to handle another. Some firms engage teams of attorneys to review and analyze documents on a project basis while other firms use contract attorneys on a regular or on call basis.

The primary motivation to use contract attorneys is simple. There is absolutely no better way to respond to the normal expansion and contraction of a busy law office. Law firms simply cannot afford to turn away business nor can they afford to find themselves in a situation where they are

unable to properly service their clients. Access to an experienced pool of appropriately-skilled, pre-screened, legal talent is an ideal and practical solution.

Through a well-established attorney placement service, such as Attorney Assistance, a law office can comfortably confront any case or project with the knowledge that they have at their disposal all of the skilled attorney-provided assistance that they could possibly need or want and that the assistance they require is only a telephone call away. Not every placement service goes to the same lengths to screen and select their registrant attorneys and thus, selecting and developing a good working relationship with a service that you can depend upon, can be of unmeasurable value.

Attorney Assistance, for instance, recruits less than twenty percent (20%) of those attorneys that seek to register with the service each and every year. A hurdle-oriented screening process with proven parameters geared to the selection of attorneys well suited to work as contract attorneys, has served the service well.

Firms seeking to engage the assistance of an attorney placement service should place importance on service attributes such as: discretionary attorney recruitment performed by attorneys; exclusive placement of attorneys vs. both attorneys and paralegals; past client use and recommendations; service calls responded to by an attorney and, most importantly, a proven, well-established ability to match the need for a particular type of assistance with an appropriately-skilled attorney.

The types of calls for assistance that we have responded to over the years is infinite in type, nature and scope. However, a ever growing number of calls involve responding to those time-consuming, often turning or result-impacting projects that can make or break a case - an obvious indication of elevated client confidence. These types of projects require an appropriately-skilled attorney that has significant previous expe-

rience handling identical types of projects and the ability to give a project his or her complete and undistracted attention.

Examples of the types of projects that Attorney Assistance is commonly called upon to respond to include: drafting and opposing complex motions for summary judgment; drafting appellate briefs; the handling of initial public offerings; assisting in the handling of complex Chapter 11 bankruptcies; drafting intellectual property licensing agreements; drafting all forms of transactional documents associated with the buying and selling of a business; and preparing for and handling court and jury trials. Finding the right attorney to handle these types of projects takes insight, experience and a past working knowledge of the proven skills, attributes and capabilities of a select portfolio of skilled attorneys. It is for this reason that selecting the right attorney to handle a project is often best left up to those that understand what is required to successfully respond to a particular need for assistance and can bring about a successful match.

Rather than relying on traditional recruiting methods, more and more law offices have come to rely upon services like Attorney Assistance to respond to their need for appropriately-skilled contract attorney help. Most would agree that law offices in need of skilled assistance require much more than a mere resume, as all too often, what you see is not always what you get.

The need and utilization of contract attorneys is here to stay and access to a well-established attorney placement service that you can depend upon has become essential to responding to the immense demands of today's busy law office.

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