

# How To Hire Outside Counsel For Your Company

Hiring outside legal counsel is an important decision for any company. Outside counsel may be needed to guide the business on an ongoing basis; or the business could be looking for an attorney to handle a single transaction or dispute. Regardless of the situation, you will need to find the *right* law firm or attorney. But here's the rub: How do you know who the right lawyer is?

A general rule of thumb that works when hiring anyone, attorney or not, is to ask for referrals from those you know and trust. Has a colleague or friend used an attorney with the kind of expertise you need? If so, find out all you can. Dig beneath the surface and ask penetrating questions about the nature of the work performed, the personality and demeanor of the attorney, and their strengths and weaknesses.

Define what's important to you so you know what questions to ask. If timeliness is crucial, do they meet all deadlines? If cost control is paramount, how do they charge? If responsiveness is key, will they return calls and emails promptly?

Specialized legal experience in the subject matter at issue is vital; while more generalized experience may not translate into value for your concerns. Get into the details when interviewing an attorney. The more details you share about your legal matter, the greater opportunity for insight about the lawyer's ability to handle your legal needs.

There are many factors to consider when hiring outside counsel in addition to those listed above. But perhaps the most important is something that is often overlooked. Put simply, make sure the attorney you intend to hire is someone you can see yourself working with. The attorney-client relationship is unique and personal. While you're not looking for a friend, you do need to be comfortable with the attorney's style and method of communicating. Although you may find a highly skilled lawyer who's a perfect match in terms of expertise, the relationship will suffer if you can't get along.

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