

How to Hire In-house Counsel (and the Benefits of Hiring In-house Counsel)

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Summary: When it comes to the delivery of legal services, most companies that have on site in-house counsel are saving money, time, and faring better in deals.

An increasingly complex, time sensitive legal environment means more and more companies are recruiting in-house counsel to handle the majority of their legal work and only turning to outside counsel for specialized advice. Why?

Reduced Legal Fees

It just makes "cents". Companies spend large amounts of money on outside legal bills every year. As salaried, full-time employees, in-house counsel can mean significant savings on legal fees.

Competitive Advantage

Today's business/legal environment is sophisticated, complex and deadly. Timely practice advice from company counsel helps fast moving companies stay out of trouble and well ahead of the competition.

On-site Advice

As an insider, the in-house lawyer knows the company's objectives and environment and can provide more customized, relevant advice.

Proactive vs. Reactive

Being internally located, in-house counsel are better able to anticipate and diffuse potential legal problems before they become critical. Even when problems do explode, in-house counsel tends to be better positioned to deal with the matter more effectively.

[Learn More About This Video](#)

Maximizing External Legal Resources

Even with in-house counsel, a company may still need highly specialized outside legal services. The in-house lawyer acts as an excellent liaison between the company and the law firm. In-house counsel understands the legal issues facing the company, is able to provide more effective instructions, knows what to expect from the firm and can translate complex legal requirements into readable information for management.

Cost Control and Audit

Most in-house lawyers will have an understanding of a law firm's billing practices. This means in-house counsel can audit the outside law firm and employ only the level of lawyer resources which are necessary, suitable for the job and fairly priced.

Why Top Lawyers Move In-house

Law school was grueling. Articles were little more than indentured servitude. Well paid lawyers with reputable law firms find themselves asking "is this as good as it gets?"

Private practice is not for everyone. Even top lawyers complain that:

they would like to be involved in more business issues;
that they would like more client interaction;
that they would prefer a more team oriented approach;
that it would be nice to have more control over their work hours; and
that they would not miss the constant law firm time billing and marketing pressures.

NOTE: IN-HOUSE JOBS ARE OFTEN SO IN DEMAND THAT COMPANIES DO NOT NEED RECRUITERS AND A PLETHORA OF WORLD CLASS CANDIDATES SIMPLY BY POSTING JOBS ONLINE:

[CLICK HERE TO POST JOBS ON LAW CROSSING \(AND TO OVER 1,000 SITES\)](#)

Practicing in-house is different. Typically, the hour requirements are more reasonable. Production targets are more reasonable. The "client" consists of senior management and internal users. Client interaction is increased and much of the law firm's time is spent in proactive "troubleshooting" through meeting or speaking with members of the company. The in-house lawyer is able to concentrate on the practice of the law itself and minimize many of the other distractions associated with private law firms. **Practicing law** on the inside can truly be the best of both worlds.

The Ideal Profile

The in-house lawyer will be called upon to assess many diverse, sophisticated and complex situations and to work in a team fashion both with internal and external groups. For this reason, the desired profile of an in-house lawyer should include:

- a sophisticated generalist with a good business sense;
- experience in some area of specialization;
- good training in general commercial law; and
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

Legal Headhunting Inc.

Hiring mistakes are costly. The trend toward in-house counsel means more companies are using **legal recruiting firms** to find the right candidate.

Who They Are

Top **legal recruiters** are generally former practicing lawyers. Legal recruiters understand the demands of practicing law and appreciate firsthand what makes a lawyer good and what it takes to move such a person in-house. See **BCGSearch** as a good example of a top legal recruiting firm.

What They Do

Firms and corporations rely upon legal recruiters to help them identify and recruit qualified candidates for a specific position. In some cases, the position itself needs to be defined. As recruitment consultants, we are often requested to provide advice on defining the role the new counsel will take. This can be especially tricky where there is confusion as to what level of responsibility is required, how much they should be paid and to whom he or she will report to.

To find qualified candidates, recruiters tend to rely primarily upon three sources:

- proactively targeting (headhunting) specific lawyers;
- file search of the current candidate resume database; and
- advertising in popular legal publications, the internet and newspapers.

Why Companies Use Legal Recruiters

Companies hire a legal recruiter for a number of key reasons:

They Understand Your Culture

Legal recruiters take the time to know and understand their client's business and needs. They will know the person, the company and what the candidate wants to ensure a good fit between the two.

They Save You Time

By delegating this process to professionals, the general counsel or VP can concentrate on their own jobs.

They Present Quality Candidates

They do this by presenting the company with top candidates from which to choose. Companies literally receive thousands of resumes when they advertise positions. It is left to the company to then sort through the resumes for qualified candidates. A legal recruiter takes this job of sorting off the company's hands.

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They Manage the Hiring Process

A sloppy process means a bad reputation, turned off candidates and a risky hire. Often, candidates apply to positions and never received an acknowledgment. Legal recruiters frequently manage the whole process and can help ensure the candidate does not fall between the cracks. The legal recruiter can provide the company with a quick turnaround so the general business is not interrupted.

They Target Top Candidates

Legal recruiters are essentially job brokers and can provide candidates with candid information and feedback about the market and their marketability.

They Maintain Confidentiality

Candidates are usually concerned about confidentiality because of the smallness of legal communities. Legal recruiters maintain confidentiality in the job search by ensuring there is interest from a specific employer prior to giving the employer the candidate's name and background.

They Work on Contingency

Finally, it is usually a no risk/no cost exercise.

More and more companies are turning to the expertise of **legal recruitment specialists** such as **BCG Attorney Search** for their in-house counsel hiring needs.