

Are you being served?



In-house lawyers face a different set of challenges to those who are working in private practice – yet fortunately there are now quite a few services out there to help. *ALB* takes a look at what's on offer

What do you do if you are an in-house lawyer and you are having trouble managing stress? And where do you turn if you need the skills of a senior lawyer but only for a temporary period? The answer? Go to one of the many providers of services to in-house lawyers who can solve just about any problem an in-house legal team might have.

As companies increasingly bring work in-house, a crop of businesses are springing up to service their needs. *ALB* looks at four different companies which offer a range of unique services to in-house lawyers – recruitment, general counsel hire, management training and system management.

Starting out

Joseph Germano, who is the executive director of recruitment at consultancy firm Integrity Legal, says that 20 years ago it was a much rarer thing to find

a company that had an internal legal department. Increasingly companies are recognising the value of retaining in-house counsel as a means of saving money and building up their business on a sound footing.

"It used to be the case that hardly any lawyers worked in-house – whereas now more companies are taking on their first in-house lawyers than ever before," he says. "They see the value of having a lawyer in-house that they can call upon and see it as a cost-cutting measure as well because it costs them ... more to outsource than to have a lawyer that is basically at their beck and call."

Germano says that clients who are looking to create an internal team from scratch often will use a recruiting service like Integrity Legal because it focuses purely on placing in-house lawyers. He says that in-house lawyers have a different mindset from those who work in private practice.

“The major difference is they’ve got a much greater commercial focus,” he says. “It’s a much more strategic role – much more hands on. When you’re working in-house you’re part of the deal from the very beginning so you’re often actually sitting down at the board table with the executives making the decisions.”

Counsels for hire

While some companies might be looking to set up a full-time legal team, others just need a senior lawyer to get a deal (or a number of deals) across the line.

Truman Hoyle’s Shane Barber says that if a company is looking for a more senior lawyer than they would get from a secondment, they will come to law firm Truman Hoyle for its general counsel services offering.

The program, which was started in 2005, provides very senior lawyers for a period that can last anywhere from a couple of weeks to a couple of years. Barber says his clients are looking for lawyers that can come in and work on a strategic level.

“What they were asking for was different to just having a secondment,” he says. “Our general counsel services



Shane Barber,
Truman Doyle

involve more senior lawyers who are often involved in strategic decision-making within the organisation in conjunction with the clients.”

Truman Hoyle operates in the ‘new economy’ sector – which encompasses telecommunications, media & technology. The strong growth which can occur here often leads to teething pains and encourages the companies to seek out the general counsel service.

“Our clients will often have had a period of heady growth and are now in that transition period where they go from acquiring all their legal services from firms like ours to moving to a situation where they can justify having an in-house lawyer,” Barber says.

“As many of those clients have grown bigger, they’ve found they need to supplement their existing legal teams but they need to supplement them at a senior level rather than just [at] a junior level.”

“They see the value of having a lawyer in-house that they can call upon and see it as a cost-cutting measure as well, because it costs them ... more to outsource than to have a lawyer”

JOSEPH GERMANO,

INTEGRITY LEGAL

Commercial awareness

Many lawyers who have worked in private practice before moving in-house will notice that it is a vastly different environment – and one where they need to keep improving to stay relevant. For those looking to find out how to maximise their value to their organisation, education and training specifically for in-house lawyers is available. Jil Toovey is the director of Institute of Knowledge Development, which offers training services. IKD provides training to major corporations such as BHP Billiton and is limited to non-legal content focusing on commercial awareness.

“We’re really looking at how they become effective in a business context,” Toovey says. “In the management leadership space we run residential for lawyers from different in-house legal teams looking at how they make the transition from being a lawyer



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to being a manager.” Topics at these three-day courses include teaching in-house lawyers how to manage a team, and how to balance the role of being a lawyer with that of being a people manager. IKD looks to improve a lawyer’s CQ – their commerciality intelligence.

“We’re teaching them how to be effective as a commercial partner to the business,” Toovey says. IKD also offers an executive development program aimed at senior counsel and general counsel. “If they’re getting a place at the executive table or getting close to that – then the executive program is for them.”

The business is bringing out a new line of work in ego management for in-house lawyers. Toovey says this will teach lawyers how to manage their own egos as well as how to work with the egos of those in the business.



Jill Toovey,
IKD

Matter management

When Justin Hansen was working as an in-house lawyer at Glaxo Wellcome (now GlaxoSmithKline) he grew frustrated that there was not a simple matter management system on the market that enabled him to keep track of the things he needed to keep track of. So Hansen created one himself and set to work selling the software to in-house legal teams across the country.

He set up LEX software group and brought his brother Richard on board to help with the business development. LEX offers matter and contract management products as well as a product that will track intellectual property portfolios.

“Justin looked around to see what was available out there and there were only expensive foreign products that weren’t tailored to in-house legal teams so he just built one himself,” Richard Hansen says. “The focus is on keeping the software simple and easy to use with a dedicated focus on the needs of in-house lawyers.”

“This allows us to focus on what they want – whether it’s file note tracking and reminders, tracking of external spending, documents, or even time reporting,” he adds.

Hansen says LEX has a client base that boasts both local and Commonwealth governments, numerous universities, and corporate entities varying in size from sole in-house lawyers up to groups with more than 100 users. ALB

“Our general counsel services involve more senior lawyers who are often involved in strategic decision-making within the organisation”

SHANE BARBER,
TRUMAN HOYLE

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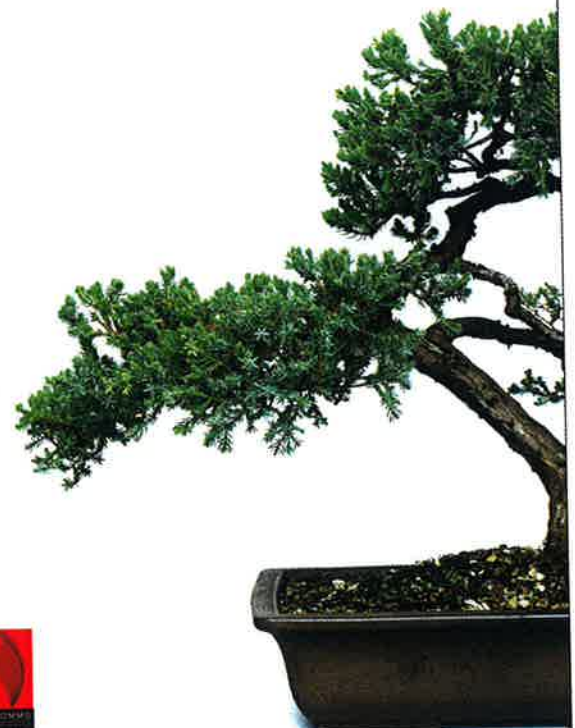
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