

Outsourcing your IT in 2018

Increasing the profits of your law practice requires an honest determination about the best use of your resources. Whether you are looking for ways to cut costs or making decisions about the most efficient use of your employees' time, effective administration can increase your earnings, while lowering your bottom line. For many law firms, that decision making process has included a real conversation about outsourcing and how some tasks may be best handled by outside businesses and professionals. Many large firms routinely outsource a variety of administrative and legal tasks, but outsourcing is not limited to mega firms and what follows is a list of outsourcing trends that may benefit your small to mid-size practice in the coming year.

Social networking tasks

In this era of social media marketing, it is extremely difficult to effectively market your practice without a strong social media presence. Even the most conservative and traditional firms have embraced the importance of social media in their overall marketing scheme. Unfortunately, a real internet presence takes time and considerable effort. Posts need to be consistent and content needs to be relevant, which requires a significant amount of hours each week. While some firms choose to place this task in the hands of a staff member, others find it more effective to outsource their social media needs to an individual or company. These companies and professionals have sprung up across the country in the last five years. They go by a variety of titles, including:

- Social media manager
- Social media coordinator
- Engagement specialist
- Public outreach coordinator

- Marketing writer

Though worded differently, all of these titles essentially refer to a person or company that handles social media marketing and content for other businesses. By outsourcing these tasks, you can consistently build and maintain an effective online presence, even while you and your firm members focus on the actual practice of law.

E-discovery

E-discovery is the process of identifying, reviewing, and producing electronically stored data. It may include the review of emails, social media, websites, audio files, databases, and a variety of other sources. The process can be extremely cumbersome, particularly for a smaller practice with limited staffing resources. In some practice areas, a single case can result in voluminous amounts of discoverable data. In addition to the content, these electronic documents may also contain metadata that also needs to be reviewed. E-discovery may also entail preservation of the original data, indexing relevant data, and document coding. These are all tasks that require a great attention to detail and a significant amount of your practice's time.

While some firms choose to bring on a few contract attorneys to handle this extra work, others find it more efficient to outsource their e-discovery tasks. Just like the social media services, e-discovery companies and firms have become a staple of the legal industry. These service providers combine the knowledge of legal and technical experts to offer advanced e-discovery services. Whether you need help with the entire process or just one particular aspect of a project, these professionals can efficiently help your firm through the resource-consuming e-discovery process.

Administrative and legal support tasks

Your practice is growing, with new clients and more lucrative matters walking through the door. You recognize the need for additional

administrative and legal help, but you are not ready to make the commitment of hiring more full-time staff members. This is the perfect scenario for virtual assistance, which allows you to outsource tasks that you may not have the time or resources to handle in-house.

The skill sets and specialties of these virtual assistants vary considerably, so you are sure to find someone who offers the particular services that you need. For example, perhaps human resources and payroll tasks are taking up too much of your valuable time. Why not outsource those tasks to a HR company or individual professional? These businesses offer everything from benefits administration to complete payroll processing.

If your need requires more of a legal expertise, you may consider a virtual paralegal service. These professionals work on-demand. This means that you only utilize their services when you need them, which can be a significant cost-savings when compared to hiring a full-time paralegal to assist you. Of course, it is extremely important to do your homework when choosing a virtual paralegal. You want someone with the proper skill set, as well as an understanding of your practice area. You also need to ensure that the individual is trustworthy, with a strong appreciation for client confidentiality.

As you start your search for a virtual paralegal, you will find that many of them formerly worked for large firms or government agencies, but set out to establish their own businesses. You will also find that most have completed paralegal educational courses and may even be certified by some professional organization. Remember, the ABA does not certify paralegals, so make an effort to thoroughly research the credentials of each virtual paralegal candidate.

IT security

It is no secret that we live in an environment where nobody's personal information is completely safe from hackers and identity thieves. However, as an attorney, you have a duty to employ reasonable efforts at keeping your client's data safe and secure. This can be an overwhelming task for a small or midsized firm that does not have the resources to employ a

dedicated cybersecurity professional. But outsourcing your IT security tasks allows you to have the benefit of full time security monitoring and prevention without a full time employee.

Hackers are constantly working on ways to infiltrate your data storage and access your confidential information. Law firms are particularly vulnerable due to the highly valuable amount of data that they generally store. IT cybersecurity specialists dedicate their days and nights to identifying the latest threats and employing methods of blocking them. By outsourcing this task, you can benefit from the best cybersecurity experts in the industry, without having to pay expert salaries. They say a person who represents himself has a fool for a client. Now, I'm not calling anyone a fool, but why not outsource your cybersecurity to a skilled and knowledgeable professional?

Outsourcing has become a standard business practice within the legal community. As you move into 2018, consider ways that outsourcing can help you cut-costs, while continuously growing your law practice.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, The Legal Writing Studio, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.