

Chapter 5 - Management and Personnel Technology Considerations

Outsourcing

Outsourcing involves having an outside firm handle network maintenance, litigation support, mail services, the mailroom, photocopying, electronic file conversion, or database management.

Some firms have decided to outsource their technological needs and refocus on the practice of law. They want to entrust the management of their administrative needs to an outside partner so they can focus on the practice of law and servicing clients. They argue that it is too expensive to compete in the IT marketplace for employees, so therefore one should outsource this requirement to outsourcing companies. Though it may not save money, it is argued that having others handle the technology headaches is worth the additional expense. Many times existing IT personnel are offered positions with the new outsourcing company. Some law firm managers argue that you are handing over the keys to the firm's lifeblood to an outside company if you use outsourcing.

Some suggestions before contacting an outsourcer:

- Create a list of possible outsourcing functions to evaluate for possible outsourcing.
- Consider working with a consultant to define the scope of the work and prepare a RFP.
- Make the contract terms as specific as possible. Spell out termination conditions, circumstances when you can adjust service level agreements, and a process on how to correct any problems.
- Have a specific contact person with the outsourcing company you can connect with quickly.
- Consider customization for your firm's needs instead of prepackages services.

When considering an outsourcing company consider the following:

- Remember you may have to cancel an existing outsourcing contract and take the business functions back in-house. It is difficult, so plan carefully whom you choose as a provider of services.
- Work out a plan with the outsourcer on how to transition employees into new jobs,

new hires with the company, replacement counseling, or even absorption into your current operation. In any event, share these discussions with the outsourcer.

- Do they have an understanding of the practice of law? Many times lawyers work nights and weekends for clients.
- Get time to know the outside contractor. If you start them on a small contract like mail room services, you can always expand later.
- Do they understand that the workload of a firm can change dramatically over the course of a year?
- What is the outsourcer's commitment to the legal market?
- What is their respond time to fix equipment?
- Do they understand the firm's security and confidentiality needs?
- Check the company's references.
- What is the length of the contract and what escape clauses are available?
- Do you have input into selecting the onsite manager?