

Alternative legal solutions 1/3/21

Alternative legal solutions are an efficient tool that helps companies balance unpredictable workflows and staff turnover and enables their legal department to work well, while cutting total costs and keeping their staff happy with their workload, pay, and growth opportunities. These solutions are no longer a proof of concept or a brand new business model. They have been tried and tested, work successfully worldwide, including Latvia, and are used by companies of different sizes.

This article explores how your CEO or head of your legal department can use alternative legal solutions such as PwC Flexible Legal Resources to allow your in-house lawyer or legal team to focus on work that makes better use of their experience, outlining how to -

1. best manage your legal department's costs;
2. achieve the right balance between the flexibility this model offers and the permanence of your existing legal department;
3. build a flexible and efficient legal team that is prepared for various present and future disruptions.

A strategic approach to using alternative legal solutions

First of all, you need to devise a strategic approach to using alternative legal solutions so your time and money are used efficiently.

Identify key areas (tasks) where outside legal experts can help your permanent team. Examples of strategic involvement of outside legal experts:

Hiring an outside expert at the right time and for the right task can play a significant role in your company's legal department by filling the gap that opens if your existing team is overloaded as the amount of work rises in a particular period.

- Assistance in the case of work overload, e.g. when your company is implementing statutory requirements or launching a new line of business (product)
- Doing day-to-day legal work while your permanent legal department is working on a special project
- Project support during periods requiring extra hands
- Access to specialist knowledge or experience your in-house legal team does not have

Consider hiring outside legal experts not only for cost savings. Properly chosen outside legal experts offer several advantages, including:

Strategic use of outside experts combines the advantages of a business-oriented in-house lawyer or compliance officer with the outside lawyer's expertise, which helps your corporate or legal leaders boost their ability to address your company's needs efficiently.

Integrating outside legal experts in your own team

When it comes to hiring outside legal experts for your company, it is important to consider best practice.

Be transparent to your in-house team.

Start small.

Take special care when choosing your first outside legal expert to ensure their skills are adequate and they successfully complement your existing legal team. Later use the good experience and success to build your in-house legal team's trust and ability to adapt to the new conditions.

Develop or strengthen your in-house legal team's leadership skills.

Involve your in-house legal team in managing and supervising the work of your outside legal expert. This is an excellent chance for your existing team members to develop their leadership skills. Ask them to assess the performance of your outside candidates and the value they add to your company.

Seek feedback from your in-house team.

Your chosen outside legal expert might not fit in with your team. If there are valid objections, substitute another candidate who better fits your company or task.

Choose a suitable outside expert and a company that provides this service.

Choose an expert with the vastest experience and highest qualifications.

Pay attention to the expert's personal characteristics and professional skills as well as their qualifications.

In-house experience

Outside legal experts frequently offer a business-oriented approach to problem-solving based on their extensive practical experience and knowledge acquired while working as an in-house lawyer in similar companies and sectors.

A flexible hiring arrangement

Outside experts fully adapt to your required amount of work, whether short-term or long-term, thus meeting your workload and budgetary requirements and giving your legal leaders considerable discretion to match your ever-changing workload with your budget.

Integration with your in-house team

You can access the same outside expert whenever you need them by combining busy periods with rest periods. Also, your company can build a long-term relationship with the expert to retain their institutional knowledge of your business principles and task descriptions.

Brief your in-house legal team early on your new approach to working that involves hiring an outside legal expert to perform particular tasks.

Evaluating the scope and complexity of legal work to be done is a challenging task even if you need to decide whether a particular task should be assigned to your in-house legal team or passed to a law firm that has experts in particular fields you do not need in your daily business.

When it comes to assessing whether a task should be given to an outside legal expert, always consider whether that task should be sent to a law firm because of their wide range of specialists or whether this could be done by an outside professional specialised in this field. An alternative in that case would be to hire a long-term employee for an indefinite period as a permanent addition to your in-house legal department. But is this necessary at the moment?

Even for simple tasks it is advisable to bring in outside legal experts with the vastest experience. Their additional experience will ensure they can quickly integrate with your in-house team and work independently.

An expert's ability to recognise and understand a problem, make a decision and offer sound solutions is a key skill to focus on. This skill will allow them to adapt to your business requirements and team faster.

Be transparent in communicating with the company that provides you with outside legal experts.

A long-term relationship and integration always pay off.

Giving a detailed description of your requirements and desires to the company that provides you with outside legal experts can help select an expert that fits your company and can best perform particular tasks.

Integrate your outside expert in your company. Provide them with all the information they need for the task so they can do it well.

Have your outside experts attend your staff meetings and corporate events so they can feel part of your in-house team.

Find ways of hiring a reliable outside expert for several projects or tasks to keep the acquired knowledge of your company and build a long-term relationship.

To boost the capacity, experience and knowledge of their in-house legal team, companies increasingly choose to enlist the assistance of an outside legal expert as part of their employment strategy.

Using alternative legal solutions in the right way assures your company of success in the short and the long run.

PwC's Flexible Legal Resources team of selected outside experts are professionals in various fields who offer a wide range of specialisation and experience. You can choose an outside legal expert or team that best fits your business or project.

Strengthen your in-house legal team today!