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Winston & Strawn Launches Winston Legal Solutions, a Tech-Powered, Right-Staffing Venture for Low-Complexity Work

By Stephanie Wilkins

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On Wednesday, Am Law 100 firm Winston & Strawn introduced Winston Legal Solutions, a new lower-cost, right-staffing model to assist with low-complexity and routine tasks that are part of its transactional, litigation and regulatory legal services offerings. The new venture encompasses the firm's existing e-discovery, managed review, information governance and trial support capabilities, according to the news release. Winston Legal Solutions will be available to all clients across all practices going forward.

In speaking with Legaltech News, John Rosenthal, chair of Winston's e-discovery and information governance practice, noted that law firm clients have become sophisticated purchasers of legal services in recent years and are ahead of law firms when it comes to their staffing and roles. Clients and the broader legal services market have been pushing the concept of right-staffing into the law firm space, which is largely still stuck in a "paralegal-associate-partner" model, he said.

"And I don't think that model necessarily works for a lot of our clients for certain kinds of work, [where] they don't want a partner-track associate at \$700 an hour," he added. "If clients can't get that level of talent at the right price inside the law firm, they're naturally going to do what



Winston Legal Solutions logo.

they've already done. They're going to go to the outsourced legal service market."

Winston Legal Solutions was created to curb exactly that loss of low-complexity legal services to alternative providers.

Reinventing the People + Process + Technology Formula

At its core, Rosenthal sees Winston Legal Solutions as adding a new talent layer to the traditional three-legged stool of law firm innovation made up of people, process and technology.

The new offering is staffed entirely by barred attorneys, in a combination of full-time employees

Courtesy photo



John Rosenthal, a partner and chair of the e-discovery and information governance practice at Winston & Strawn.

and project-based hires, as necessary. For example, if a particular client or engagement requires a specific skill set that is not immediately available internally, the firm will recruit externally, often hiring long-term, project-based attorneys who are managed, supervised and trained by Winston.

The news release further noted that “Winston Legal Solutions gives the firm’s clients a law firm alternative to the outsourced legal provider marketplace with Winston-retained and trained legal services attorneys using established processes, proven playbooks, a state-of-the-art technology stack, and newer generative AI tools, where available and appropriate.”

Rosenthal, who is also co-chair of Winston’s recently formed Artificial Intelligence Strategy Group, brings a strong technological focus to Winston Legal Solutions. The initiative is part of the broader Winston 3.0 strategy articulated by Chair-elect Steve D’Amore, who will take the reins at the firm in June, focusing on a modern law firm built on the right people, the right processes and the right technology. In the release, D’Amore, along with current Winston Chair Tom Fitzgerald, called Winston Legal Solutions an “additional talent component [that] is important to servicing our clients’ needs and responding to their concerns about controlling costs.”

The Winston 3.0 strategy includes being at the forefront of generative AI, though with a caveat, Rosenthal noted. “I think [the AI] market is full of a lot of hype, and we have what I call the maturity continuum. There are certain products that are ready for prime time, and there are a lot that

are not ready for prime time,” he explained. “Our strategy is really a short-term/long-term play. Short term, let’s identify the tools we think are ready to grow, that will increase productivity and bring value to our clients. And then let’s identify other products that are going to take a longer time, where we’re probably going to have to identify some [providers], and have identified some, and we’re going to work with them to help bring those products along.”

Rosenthal added, “We don’t want to be a software manufacturer. We think that’s a mistake.” Instead, as part of Winston Legal Solutions, the firm’s goal is to partner with different software providers and help them develop their products to best handle repetitive, commodity-type work. Examples include leveraging technology to better handle nondisclosure agreements, due diligence and regulatory filing on the transactional side, or e-discovery, deposition and motion support on the litigation side.

Created to Meet Market Demands

The alternative staffing concept isn’t new to Winston, which first built a managed review services operation inside its e-discovery practice, with Rosenthal’s help, in 2008 in order to compete with some of the bigger vendors in the space. Then, a couple years ago, when Winston took a step back to see where the market was heading in terms of other low-complexity work, “we came to the realization that we either have to create a new level of talent to compete for that work, or we have to let that go out the door. And our view is we want to be a full-service provider for our clients, and we want to give them an option with the right talent level at the right price for that work,” he explained.

The Winston Legal Solutions initiative started internally as a soft launch about two years ago. This gave the firm the chance to build out the talent, the processes and the tool set and prove that the idea worked before opening it to the broader market, Rosenthal said.