The Law On Demand

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The on demand economy is now far more expansive than transportation or food delivery. In fact, lawyers now make up a growing aspect of this market as an increasing number make themselves available as "contract attorneys" hired to perform limited tasks. For example, large law firms may hire a contract attorney to participate in a massive discovery project or assist with general document review. These jobs can last a day or two, or perhaps up to several months. The appeal to law firms (and their clients) is that contract attorneys often come at a lower hourly rate than a more traditionally employed attorney. This is especially true when firms in large cities enlist the work of out of town attorneys who can often work remotely.

For the attorneys themselves, the appeal of working "gigs" may be the same flexibility that appeals to many in the gig economy. As my colleague discussed here, mothers may be particularly attracted to the option of continuing to work while maintaining flexibility and family time. Contract work provides this option which was not necessarily readily available to lawyers in years past. Furthermore, other attorneys may have graduated from law school during the economic downturn and found that more traditional jobs were simply not available. Working contract jobs can be a nice alternative (or supplement) to hanging out a shingle and working as a solo practitioner.

Of course, only time will tell whether the use of contract attorneys will continue to rise, or whether the attorneys themselves will grow tired of the arrangement and instead turn to positions with stability and benefits. For now, the influx in lawyers in the gig economy highlights just how ubiquitous the on demand economy has become.

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