

STRICTLY LEGAL

Tracking issues and movements within Montreal's legal community



SARAH DOUGHERTY

TRENDS

Outsourcer works from home

Small companies often can't keep a lawyer on staff. But they still need legal advice. Overworked in-house lawyers at large companies often need outside assistance. Even law firms are looking at farming out work to keep costs down for clients.

Karen Michetti has turned the outsourcing trend into a business opportunity. A former in-house lawyer herself, she started **Spettro Consultants Inc.** a year ago.

Spettro provides legal and business advice, mostly to small businesses in the Montreal area. Sole owner of Spettro, Michetti hires consultants as needed, including translators, paralegals, graphic designers and Web specialists.

From incorporating companies to keeping their legal registers, designing logos to drafting contracts, setting up Web sites and advising on marketing strategies, Michetti aims to be a one-stop-shop for her clients.

"Companies can pay as they go instead of hiring a lawyer and paying a salary," Michetti said of her business model.

Another plus for clients and a trend that might be gaining ground: Michetti quotes clients on a project basis instead of charging by the hour. "I have a lot of clients who tell me they don't understand why they (lawyers) charge hourly," she said. While she has lost out when projects took much longer than estimated, Michetti often builds in a contingency for unexpected overruns. Working from home, Michetti minimizes overhead and passes the savings on to clients. In another new spin on delivering legal ad-

vice, she goes to clients instead of vice-versa. The advent of electronic legal databases and the Internet has helped make this home office arrangement possible, she said.

In another new trend, law firms are starting to farm out work to consultant lawyers, Michetti said.

"They are a little more reluctant," she said of this type of outsourcing. The motivation for a change? Keeping costs down in an era when clients are feistier about challenging billing practices, and competition is stiffer after a slew of law firm mergers.

"People generally have a very bad impression of lawyers," Michetti said. "Lots of clients are gun shy because of previous bad experiences. I always say 'give me a chance.'"

COMINGS & GOINGS

Pukall joins Borden Ladner

Monica Pukall has been hired by the Montreal office of **Borden Ladner Gervais**. She joins the firm's commercial real estate group as an associate. Pukall, a recent call to the bar, articulated at **Blake Cassels & Graydon**. Borden now has 100 lawyers in Montreal and a total of 670 professionals in six Canadian offices.

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is published every second Thursday in The Gazette's Business section. Submissions can be sent to sarahdougherty@videotron.ca

