



Using Legal Analytics for Lateral Hiring

As the market is picking up and becoming increasingly competitive, you want to make sure that you are hiring the best possible talent for your practice. Watch the on-demand webcast with Ojen Sirin, Director of Strategic Talent Management at Sullivan & Worcester, Raffaele V. Murdocca, Director of Attorney Recruiting at Fisher & Phillips, and Neil Magenheim, Director of Client Relations at Lex Machina. You will learn from these industry experts how you can leverage Legal Analytics to find and evaluate candidates that truly are as good as they claim.

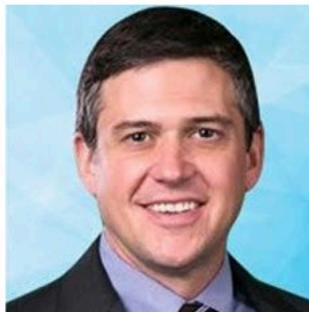
See how you can answer questions such as these in just seconds:

- Identify the right candidates
- Evaluate real experience with cases, judges, venues, parties
- Review client history of your candidate
- Verify their true performance
- Compare claims with reality

Speakers:



Ojen Sirin
Director of Strategic
Talent Management
Sullivan & Worcester



Raffaele V. Murdocca
Director of Attorney Recruiting
Fisher & Phillips



Neil Magenheim
Director of Client Relations
Lex Machina

Neil Magenheim [\(00:00\)](#):

Hello again, and welcome everyone to the Lex Machina Legal Analytics and Practice Series webcast. Today, we'll be talking about using legal analytics as it relates to lateral hiring. What is Lex Machina? Lex Machina is legal analytics. Legal analytics allow our customers to make more informed data-driven decisions. Some of the most recognizable largest companies in the world use Lex Machina, amongst other things, to select, evaluate, and benchmark their outside counsel and to help inform and guide their litigation strategy. Hundreds of law firms use Lex Machina to help them win, help them win business, help them optimize outcomes on behalf of their clients and their firms.

Neil Magenheim [\(00:50\)](#):

My name's Neil Magenheim. I'm the Director of Client Relations here at Lex Machina, and I couldn't think of two better speakers to introduce you to you, to help us with this really trendy topic regarding lateral hiring. First I'd like to introduce Ojen Sirin. Ojen is the Director of Strategic Talent Management at Sullivan & Worcester. Her focus is on developing the firm's attorneys through talent management, individual career development plans, evaluation and feedback systems, and strategic and comprehensive work brokering approaches. Ojen oversees the firm's attorney recruiting efforts and works in partnership with the firm's hiring committee and management to source and attract all levels of attorneys to the firm. Ojen also oversees the firm's marketing and business development departments, and strategically works with partners and practice groups in their business generation efforts. Ojen, thank you again for your time today. We really appreciate you joining us.

Neil Magenheim [\(01:50\)](#):

Our second speaker, I'm happy to introduce you to is Raffaele Murdocca. Raffaele has over 20 years of experience recruiting attorney talent for law firms. Raffaele has been with Fisher Phillips, an Am Law 150 firm, focused on the practice of labor and employment law for the last 13 years. Again, Raffaele, thank you for your time and energy and joining us today.

Neil Magenheim [\(02:15\)](#):

So to help frame the conversation, I thought it'd be interesting to let both of our speakers introduce themselves to the audience, give a little bit about their background, which is really interesting, and how they got to where they are today, as it relates to this whole theme of strategic talent management. Ojen, let's start with you.

Ojen Sirin [\(02:32\)](#):

Sure. Thank you, Neil. Hi, everyone. As Neil said, my name's Ojen Sirin, and I oversee the talent business development marketing functions at Sullivan & Worcester, which is a mid-sized law firm based in Boston, with offices in New York, Washington, DC, London, and Tel Aviv. I went to law school and practiced for a little bit and then moved over to the business side of law firm management first at a large New York City law firm, and then transitioned to my current firm, which I've been at now for 14 years, and have very much enjoyed being on the strategic side of the law firm world and legal practice generally. But as Neil said, I oversee all of our attorney development functions at the firm, including recruiting and diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as the real business side of it on the business development and strategic growth of the firm. And that certainly works well into this conversation because when we are analyzing things like growth, lateral recruiting is a huge chunk of that. So, that's just a little bit about me.

Neil Magenheim (03:55):

Thank you, Ojen. Raffaele, over to you.

Raffaele V. Murdocca (03:58):

Yeah. Thanks, Neil. So I also went to law school and practiced for a couple of years in tax and then was an outside search consultant working solely with attorneys and placing them in corporations and law firms for two different companies. And then Fisher & Phillips was a client of mine and asked me to interview for a position that they were creating, which was the National Director of Recruiting and Development. So I came on board and I've been involved in many different areas of the firm since I've been here, worked directly with the management committee and the managing partners all throughout the firm. We have 36 offices and close to 500 attorneys. But when I got here, we had less than 200 attorneys and we had 19 offices.

Raffaele V. Murdocca (04:55):

So I helped with opening up new offices for us, bringing on groups of lateral talent, as well as work with individual partners and of councils and associates and oversee our entire hiring process. I have sat on our diversity and inclusion committee since I got here, as well as the associate development and retention committee, and helped with our retreats and all kinds of fun stuff. So, it's been a crazy lateral hiring market, as we're about to get into.

Neil Magenheim (05:33):

Thank you both again for those wonderful introductions of yourself. As our audience can appreciate the way I am, two great speakers for this topic, and really just the wealth of experience that you bring to the table, and just the interesting trajectories for both of you, for your careers as far as practicing, and then ultimately getting so intimately involved with management and how personnel helps achieve those strategic growth goals. So really excited and looking forward to this conversation. So let's start with Ojen. Ojen, Let's talk a little bit about trends and what type of trends are you seeing in hiring new talent?

Ojen Sirin (06:12):

Sure. So the last year and a half, actually two years, has been certainly interesting in the legal market. I think 2020 started out fairly strong in the transactional world in particular, which for my firm it's while we have a very strong litigation practice, I think the bulk of the firm is a transactional based firm. But then, like the rest of us, went through a crazy cycle in March of 2020 where work just sort of stopped, and there was a lot of confusion and influx as to what would happen in terms of workflow. I think firms responded in different ways, but the positive to all this is that the end of 2020 and 2021 has been booming, I think, across the legal industry, which has been quite remarkable actually to see, and is a testament to the fact that I think law firms are finally starting to be a little bit more innovative and open to change and really starting to understand that what's happening in corporations should be mimicked in law firms as well.

Ojen Sirin (07:37):

So in terms of what's been hot, I mean, certainly capital markets has been incredibly hot, both on the hiring side and on the business side. No doubt that bankruptcy and employment work has been hot, and private equity and venture capital. And in terms of industry, what we have seen is technology and life sciences, just as a complete boom-

Ojen Sirin ([08:03](#)):

We have seen, is technology and life sciences, just as a complete boom, not just in, traditional, emerging growth company, private equity way, but actually in the real estate world too. I mean, in Boston, Neil, you might know this, but labs being developed, all over Massachusetts really, including central Massachusetts. So, it's been an interesting development for sure. And it's a trend that I think is going to continue through the end of this year. And I'm sure Raffaele knows this too, the associate market has been absolutely insane this year. And if anyone follows the trends, with the increase of salaries across a lot of the big firms, that's put a lot of pressure on other firms to, either follow suit, or offer something else on the trying to attract lateral hires. For us, it's been very interesting. We had a very hot lateral partner market last year. This year has been, medium hot for us, but we've been also focused on council a little bit, because I think there have been some council that have been actually in corporations that are looking to get out of corporations and in to the law firm world, maybe because of the salary increases, but we've had a good number of counsel hires, which has been an interesting trend for us, at least.

Neil Magenheim ([09:39](#)):

Hmm, so interesting.

Ojen Sirin ([09:41](#)):

Raffaele, I don't know what you're saying.

Neil Magenheim ([09:42](#)):

Yeah, I'd love to dig into that, but let's get a little insight from Rafael on what he's seeing from a trends perspective.

Raffaele V. Murdocca ([09:49](#)):

Yeah, so we are also looking for subject matter experts, right? So, counsels who are focused specifically in certain niche areas. We've always been focusing on that, but there's more of a focus, I would say this year. For example, we do labor and employment law. So, COVID has been... We've done a tremendous amount of advice and counsel work, both on the front end with the employees and coming on into the office and how to deal with things? And so on, but then also now with vaccines, right? And so, we're giving that advice as well, to our clients. We actually gained over 6,000 clients, because of COVID. [crosstalk 00:10:37] It was pretty remarkable.

Neil Magenheim ([10:39](#)):

That's remarkable.

Raffaele V. Murdocca ([10:39](#)):

We are extremely busy as a firm. And so, to piggyback on that, like OSHA, right? Is an area that we're looking for subject matter experts in, because there are a lot of, and going to be OSHA claims, workplace safety.

Raffaele V. Murdocca ([10:57](#)):

So, we're seeing that. I'm working with a few different groups right now across the country, in different practice areas, immigration, in wage hour, class action work, litigation, and then others. So, I'm seeing a trend in California. We are extremely busy in California, I think that's just because of all the regulations

in California. And so, we cannot hire enough associates, or bring in enough partners in that marketplace, even though we are all over the country with 36 offices, we have six offices specifically there, that we see continual growth. I mean, for the rest of this year and probably for years to come. Those, I would say for us in particular, we're seeing that those are the trends.

Neil Magenheim ([12:02](#)):

It's amazing. Congratulations on higher success for both of you. Just one follow up question quickly, I'll let Ojen lead with this one is, so as hot as the market is, you're doing everything you can to attract talent, to come to your firms. What are you doing to retain all of your top level talent?

Ojen Sirin ([12:22](#)):

Yeah, it's a really good question. One of the things I think, that we offer as a midsize firm and that we really focus on and hone in on, is just the culture piece of it. And I think one thing that has rang very true this year is that, with everything that's happened with respect to COVID and all the fears that we have dealt with, both as a society and as an industry, is just remembering that at the end of the day, what we're managing is people, right? And people have families and personal lives in addition to being business generators for our firm and profit centers for our firms. So, there has been, at least for my job, and I can imagine Raffaele is probably the same, it's really been that one-on-one outreach. And just letting people know that as an organization, as people, we're here for them.

Ojen Sirin ([13:26](#)):

And I think really as organizations we've had to be very nimble, and try to go out of our comfort zones, even within management to really reach into people's lives and say, "Okay, we're going to work with you, whatever you need, we'll we'll provide." And whether that's on the technology side, so that people can work more efficiently at home, certainly being understanding in terms of scheduling meetings. But, I think it's really the flexibility. And I think it's changed the law firm world forever, as those of us that have been in this industry for a while, I mean, there was a FaceTime piece of being in the law firm. And I think that, is really over in a way. I mean, maybe for very junior associates, it's still there. And perhaps as a lateral hire, that first couple of months, or a few months it's important, but we've proven that we can do this job pretty effectively from anywhere. And I think that's really going to be the game changer in terms of retaining talent.

Neil Magenheim ([14:42](#)):

That's great insight, thank you. Raffaele, quickly over to you on the retention side, and then we could move on with the program.

Raffaele V. Murdocca ([14:50](#)):

Yeah, I echo what Ojen said. I mean, it has to do with flexibility and reaching out to people. I mean, we had little small town halls, the chairman of our firm would ask, "How are you doing? Is there anything that you want to talk about during this time? I know that it's been very difficult for everybody." And so, it was a sharing time for us, which was really nice. You don't normally get that from a chairman of a large law firm. But, for us too, it's the culture, it's the people. Not to plug us, but we do these exit interviews and 90% of the people, we asked them, "What do you like best about our firm?" And 98% of them say, "The people, the people at my office, the people across the firms, people that I got to meet at the retreats, people that I get to work with." So, that's how you retain your people, is really having them

enjoy working with one another. And what we've been trying to do is in individual offices, set up weekly meetings and check-ins, and that thing, along with our metro...

Raffaele V. Murdocca ([16:03](#)):

... weekly meetings and check-ins, and that sort of thing, along with our mentor program and sponsor programs. It's really about togetherness, even though you may not be together in the office.

Neil Magenheim ([16:12](#)):

Don't be afraid to plug, Raffaele, this is [inaudible 00:16:16]. I love it. So what's really interesting is both of you have a really unique perspective on engagement at the strategic level, and then the tactical level. So in other words, you're both involved with management and understanding what are those strategic growth goals? What are those things that must go right in order for your firms to be successful? Can you tell the audience briefly about the interactions you have at the strategic level and in turn, how you leave those conversations and meetings and say, "Okay, we need to start looking at processes for lateral hire?"

Ojen Sirin ([16:54](#)):

Yeah. I can start with that. So I think fundamentally you have to look internally before you look externally and whenever you're approaching lateral hires specifically on the partner side is you have to do your own internal assessment. What practice areas are you really focused on? And what are the metrics that, that practice area has produced internally? What are the hours like for the rest of the people in that practice area? Because inevitably when you bring people in, you don't want it to have an adverse reaction across the board within the practice group. So we look at filling within the preface area. We look at whether or not that we anticipate that practice area being busy long-term, kind of looking at the last three years and whether or not we're hoping that it will stay on track.

Ojen Sirin ([17:55](#)):

Succession planning is a huge piece of it. One of the things that I work on internally is I put org charts together of every practice group and just look at the pipeline. Whose clients are represented in the org chart? And where people are in terms of their trajectory, in terms of their career. And then you kind of make decisions that way. And then when we actually come up with a plan, we start with the very easy way to source lateral hires, which is, who knows who. I mean, the markets that we're in, we have attorneys that practice within those markets and if there are laterals that we know and trust, we go to them first and see if they're willing to make a move. And if they're not, then inevitably we go to head hunters, but the head hunter process can be complex.

Ojen Sirin ([18:56](#)):

And you have the people that you go to and rely on and you tell them what you're looking for, but then you really have to trust them that they're sourcing... They know your firm well enough to know who's going to be successful here, but then obviously the sourcing part of it is the hard part because you just don't know. So you can use Google and the lateral partner questionnaire once you get down that path. But it is a complex process on the partner side. The associate side, it's a little bit easier and I think economically you're willing to take a chance a lot more, but on the partner side, it takes a while to really get to that offer stage.

Neil Magenheim ([19:48](#)):

Nope. That makes a lot of sense. I want to be sensitive to our time here. We have about nine minutes together and want to get everyone out of here on time. What I've heard is data is very important to that process, Ojen, right? So you're looking at internal data, you're looking at external data. Raffaele just in the next like 30 seconds, is there anything that you'd like to add regarding processes for lateral hiring and why data is important?

Raffaele V. Murdocca ([20:16](#)):

Yeah, well for us just real quick, so we took inventory of our star performers and we wanted to see what characteristics they had and obviously their books of business and all those metrics, but it was really about, what are the qualities that these people have? And these are the types of people that we want to bring in to join our firm. And we're always looking at one plus one equals three. How can we help you grow your business? How can you help us in this practice area or industry group where it's just going to be fantastic for everybody? And we do look at... Analyze information to do that as well.

Neil Magenheim ([21:05](#)):

Got it. That makes a lot of sense. Thanks for adding a little bit of color behind that. So as we were talking about different ways that you could see yourselves using data to help accomplish what you're looking to accomplish to ultimately achieve your strategic growth goals through the lens of... Excuse me, lateral hiring. Excuse me. One of the conversation points that came up is, Raffaele, we were speaking and you were thinking, "Okay, what if we wanted to potentially open up an office in Minnesota? What type of data can Lex Machina share with us to help find prospective candidates for our employment practice?" Right. So I've now transitioned to Lex Machina and what you can see here is that I could now dive in to employment cases. So we could see some trend lines year over year.

Neil Magenheim ([21:58](#)):

We can see it's trending up. It's trending up from 2020 to 2021. Then the other interesting data points that we spoke about is trying to figure out what firms are most frequently representing the defendant in these cases. So one of the pieces I showed you here, and then I'll just lay it out here and then I'll let you speak to it is, what firms and what attorneys are representing the defendant in employment cases in the District of Minnesota? So you can see how quickly I was able to bring that to light here. Can you provide the audience just a little context into this and how it might be helpful?

Raffaele V. Murdocca ([22:34](#)):

Yeah. I mean, this is incredible because it's not like you're starting from scratch. You get to see which client that specific attorneys are working with at specific firms. Now, those may be clients that we currently work with that are not in the full, because we're not in that marketplace or these are clients in industries that we want to be in and working with. And so we would reach out to those partners. And then also, you could see what the cases are. So what type of work they actually work on and that may be a specific practice area that we may be interested in, like trade secret or unfair competition, or just general employment litigation or wage hour, whatever it may be. So there are a number of ways that we can use this data to help us as a starting point in contacting folks.

Neil Magenheim ([23:33](#)):

That's great context there. And Ojen, I want to pass it over to you quickly. I'm going to pull the employment case tag off of the data and stick with the District of Minnesota for demonstration purposes here, but when you start thinking about case filing trends, how important is it for you to get

your arms around where the trends are as far as where it might make sense for [inaudible 00:23:57] to start investigating potentially bringing folks on board?

Ojen Sirin ([24:02](#)):

Yeah. Well, it's interesting, Neil, because...

Neil Magenheim ([24:03](#)):

... bringing folks on board.

Ojen Sirin ([24:03](#)):

Yeah. Well, it's interesting Neil, because I think you can approach it from two angles. One is almost a business internal business development approach, right? If we were in the district of Minnesota, just to see where the trends are in litigation's and whether or not we have a strength in that area, and if we don't, that then can dictate lateral hiring, right?

Ojen Sirin ([24:28](#)):

If this is a trend that's continuing, right? Over the course of however many years, then that sort of shapes your strategic plan with respect to lateral hiring. I think this is super helpful from both the internal business development perspective, what are we doing internally with this area and this trend? And then to the extent that we don't have the internal capabilities in this area then it shapes our strategic hiring. I think this is great.

Neil Magenheim ([25:00](#)):

That's awesome, thank you for the additional context around that. I wanted to share with our audience, you can search Lex Machina for attorneys and for law firms, but given the nature of our conversation, we didn't feel it was right to put specific attorneys into Lex Machina, but I wanted to show you how we can put a law firm into Lex Machina. I'm not going to get into very specifics here, but I want to show you the type of insights that we could take away from this data.

Neil Magenheim ([25:33](#)):

What we've learned over time in speaking with a lot of our clients regarding lateral hiring use cases, being able to use Lex Machina to evaluate the attorneys from, in this case, a patent litigation perspective. We want to know what their litigation book of businesses is. And just imagine any attorney here, not a firm, and we could see interesting information, like what parties are they most frequently represented? I'll just pause there for one second and maybe you can shed a little light, Raffaele, on why it's important to use data from a book of business perspective and how that impacts... My new favorite acronym is LPQ, your lateral partner questionnaire and part of that process.

Raffaele V. Murdocca ([26:17](#)):

Yeah, the lateral partner questionnaire, the partners list out their clients and the dollars associated with that, and sometimes their cases that are active. This is basically just a check on if it's a litigation book of business, you're able to easily go in and say, "Okay, yes, yes, yes, but where's this case that's supposed to be active?" It gives you a lot of data that you wouldn't normally have access to that you can easily go back to the lateral partner candidate and talk to them about this. And so it helps you make your

decisions, it helps you as far as really understanding what their book of business may be, and it helps you put together a deal or not, really.

Neil Magenheim ([27:14](#)):

Yeah, that's great. I'm sorry, we're rushing through a little bit here, I want to be sensitive to everyone's time. And I did have one question I wanted to close with, while I'm asking that I'll check the Q&A as well to see if anyone from the audience submitted any questions. But based on my individual experience, in the legal industry has been 20 plus years here, and a lot of the conversations I've had regarding lateral hiring is, what's at risk? And I've been told by many friends in the industry and clients, et cetera, that a bad lateral hiring decision can cost the firm potentially millions of dollars. In closing here, Ojen I'll start with you, what are your thoughts on that? And then Raffaele, I'll pass it over to you when she's done.

Ojen Sirin ([28:05](#)):

That is certainly true and I think every law firm has had the scenario play out. I think prior to technology there was very little that you could really do to prevent that from happening, right? But not only does it affect the firm economically, but it certainly can affect the firm culturally. And I think sometimes that even has a bigger impact on the organization because it could ripple through whether a specific practice area, your associates, whatever. It's not just how that individual partner is affecting the bottom line, it's a domino effect across the board. I completely agree with that statement.

Neil Magenheim ([28:57](#)):

Raffaele, over to you.

Raffaele V. Murdocca ([28:59](#)):

Yeah, just add to that, I agree in the fact that if you bring on a lateral partner and at that person just fails, right? Even though you've tried to help that person as a firm and given them an ample amount of time and the business doesn't come that they said was going to come, and so on and so forth. Besides everybody being upset in that practice group and in that office, and management, and everything like that, and the person not being happy either, they eventually leave, but then your gun shy. There are a number of partners, maybe in that practice group or industry focus, who are like, "Yeah, we shouldn't even bring on another lateral partner because of what just happened." It's really about trying to get over that so that we can focus in on bringing other laterals into the firm that are really important strategically for where we want to go. It's very damaging, unfortunately, for everybody.

Neil Magenheim ([29:59](#)):

Yeah, just to wrap up, a lot at risk, a lot at stake when you're making these strategic lateral hiring decisions. In closing, Ojen and Raffaele, 30 minutes comes and goes so quickly, I wish we had more time together. So much I wanted to piggyback on it and dig into. I can't thank you enough for your time and preparation, and energy. It was an amazing webcast. Thank you to our audience for tuning in. If you'd like to learn more, here's my contact information. Feel free to visit lexmachina.com. Again, thank you everyone for your time and participation today. This concludes the Lex Machina lateral hiring webcast. Thank you.

Ojen Sirin ([30:41](#)):

Thank you.

Raffaele V. Murdocca ([30:42](#)):

Thank you.