

Building Your “A-Team”

How the Legal Profession Can Benefit from Diverse and Unique Experts in the Field

BY CHRISTINE MEADOR

When you think of a supreme team, what comes to mind? Perhaps you would imagine a group of top notch individuals placed together to accomplish a set goal or objective. Whether it is a business team, a sports team or a litigation team, choosing your “team members” is critical to the success of your project or goal. So, how can litigation support experts help your legal team? Whether you are dealing with litigation, mediation or arbitration, utilizing individuals specialized in the area of forensics, dispute analysis & litigation support can be essential in more ways than one. Understanding what “litigation support” professionals do and the types of services they offer can open a door to a wide array of benefits that can support your legal team.

Path to becoming a dispute analysis & litigation support “team member.”

My desire to work in forensic accounting goes back many years to a presentation on Fraud Prevention. During this presentation, the presenter discussed the strategy of developing a “forensic team.” Specifically, I recall he mentioned one of his team members had a background in teaching. A teacher on a forensic team? That surprised me! In the end, I learned that a forensic team was diverse and strategically selected to support the case. The main point that stuck with me is that these elite teams are filled with a diverse group of individuals. What this did for me was introduce me to the possibility of a career and set me on my path to becoming a member on a forensic accounting team.

From my own personal experience, I found that moving into the profession of fraud prevention was challenging. The key for me was a wide range of experience, education and certifications. Along the way, I began working in the nonprofit sector and found I enjoyed the field, the mission and the accounting work. My years of experience with nonprofits would be a defining factor that added to my current work in disputes and litigation support.

The nonprofit sector is a large part of the economy offering important services which often affect our everyday lives. In every community we are filled with nonprofits. We rely on these organizations for the services they provide, for employment and for the benefits they provide to our communities. These organizations are formed with boards of directors and rely heavily on management for the operations. The governance oversight is through the board of directors and supporting committees. The complex nature of the nonprofit entity, which involves boards, committees, management, employment and volunteers, requires a unique understanding. In addition to this, the nonprofit finance structure can also be extensive; therefore, it is critical to have a keen understanding of nonprofit financial management. Ultimately, knowledge and expertise in the area of audits, boards, budgets, corporate governance, grants and funding are key requirements to success. Having individuals with a unique expertise in this area is especially useful when dealing with the challenges of nonprofit management.

I have often found, the more diverse the expertise, the more valuable the player. The versatility of a team member is critical. In my own personal experience, I see how my versatility along with experience, education and certifications has increased my value as a team member. In the end, my background in the nonprofit sector along with certifications in Nonprofit Management and as a Certified Fraud Examiner has placed me as a good candidate for consulting, dispute analysis and litigation support in this area.

What is litigation support?

One of the most common questions I have received is, “How does analysis or forensic accounting work affect litigation?” As this is a specialized area, it is important to lay out how accounting and analysis work can be a critical benefit to litigation support. Let’s take a look at a definition of litigation support and how a specialist in this area can be a great asset to your team.

A “broad definition” of litigation support is all work used to assist in preparing for a legal case

or matter. Professionals out in the field may offer a variety of services that can assist in the area of litigation support. The areas in “accounting and litigation support” that can offer assistance is in the area of dispute analysis, forensic accounting, forensic investigations, business valuations, mediations and arbitrations.

How can litigation support professionals help you?

Professionals versed in this type of work can be a critical addition to your team. These professionals can offer your team talents and expertise to support your needs. To have a specialist allows increased quality and efficiency in the service as well as an extended range of services. An example of individuals used in litigation support could be a Certified Public Accountant or a Certified Fraud Examiner. As a Certified Fraud Examiner, professionals are trained in Fraud Prevention & Detection, Financial Transactions & Fraudulent Schemes, Investigations and the Law. These are individuals certified with experience, professional hour requirements and working in the area of litigation support on a regular basis.

Litigation support can deliver an array of services on many levels ranging from basic analysis support to expert witness. In a sense, this is having a forensic litigation member on your team. Disputes is an area of services in which legal assistance may be required by attorneys or clients in relation to a legal matter such as arbitration, mediation or litigation. Even disputes unrelated to a legal case can move to litigation; therefore, involving professionals in advance of legal action can be a strategic move and a critical piece in planning. In addition to disputes, litigation support may cross into areas of government contracts and business valuations.

There is success in a solid presentation of facts whether it is a review on losses, financial statements or an analysis projecting business losses for future earnings. Having a team member focusing on a financial analysis or an expert report may be the key factor in supporting your case. Utilizing individuals

specialized in the area of analysis can illuminate facts in a manner to increase mutual resolution. In the end, this could be the critical piece to resolving a case or settling a mediation matter.

Services in action

Diversity in services filters down to the clients you are serving. By offering a wide range of services, you have the ability to serve a diverse group. As a member of the accounting team, I am able to “bring to the table” expertise in the nonprofit sector which plays into my work in disputes analysis and forensic investigations. As we move into an era of increased mediation & arbitration, it pays to have a diverse team of specialists to support litigation matters or disputes. Whether you are working on a case, client dispute, questions or training, securing an outside specialist could be exactly what you need to get the job done.

In the area of litigation support, Medica, LLC. is a Cleveland CPA firm “making it happen.” As a leading pioneer in fraud prevention, disputes, analysis and investigations, the firm offers a wide range of services with a diverse leadership team experienced in national & international matters. Every case is unique and no project will be the same. The value of the firm is that ability to pull in team members as assets to the project at hand.

Dispute analysis project.

To give an overview of our “services in action”, let’s take a closer look at an example of a dispute project. This is not a case; however, a client dispute can turn into a litigation matter; therefore, proper preparation is critical. In this example, a large nonprofit organization held a grant contract yet experiences a decline in payment for services rendered. This was a substantial amount of funding tied to a government grant contract.

The project was time based and critical to have completed with a deadline of one week. In a pinch situation, you may have individuals in-house, yet pulling key people together to accomplish a high level project that is not coming together may be difficult. In this situation, the client’s in-house approach was not working and the organization secured the team to handle the client dispute. The team was pulled together utilizing the various members versed in government contracts, nonprofits, grant proposals and financial analysis.

This particular engagement operated similar to that of an audit with team members having designated roles and operating at the client location. In the end, the team functions to facilitate an end goal, which in this case was full preparation of a Request for Equitable Adjustment, to include reports, financial work and charts.

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In a world with global opportunities, diversity puts the ball in the hand of those that recognize and utilize that strength. As you can see with the dispute presented, projects are not clear cut. Disputes and legal matters do not fit a mold and building a support team to address the project issues at hand are critical. By utilizing “litigation support” professionals, you open your opportunities to a unique group of individuals versed with the expertise, background and training to work with legal matters that can strengthen your legal team.



Christine M. Meador is a forensic accountant at Medica, LLC. She has extensive experience in accounting, budget development, grant work, financial reporting, internal controls and analysis of business strategies. Christine focuses on assisting organizations with fraud prevention and investigations. Christine has been a CMBA member since 2017. She can be reached at cmeador@medicacpa.com.