

November, 2011/Final

BRINGING OUTSIDERS IN AS MANAGEMENT OR BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS AS ADVISORS

Assuming the expected partner approval, today - November 7 - an outsider, Tony Angel, joins DLA Piper as co-chair of the entire 4,200-lawyer firm. This is probably an unprecedented move, at least in BigLaw. Corporations frequently hire senior executives from outside the company – or even from outside their industry – but large law firms almost always elect partners to senior management positions. In most cases this means they have little senior management experience and must climb a steep learning curve.

In addition to having served as Linklaters' firm-wide managing director for nine years, Angel also has corporate management experience. After leaving Linklaters, he was an executive managing director for Standard & Poor's and then CEO of Vantage Diagnostics Ltd.

Legal pundits are divided in their opinions of DLA's move. Some point out the advantages – experience, a fresh perspective and not being already aligned with any factions in the firm – and believe other large firms may do the same. But other experts say there are few firms like DLA and few lawyers like Angel so that it will be difficult, if not impossible, for other firms to take such a step.

However, there are a few MidLaw firms who are bringing non-lawyer outsiders – business professionals – into their management structure in addition to a COO. We previously reported that national insurance firm Nelson Levine de Luca & Horst had formed an Executive Board of retired executives from prominent insurers. At least one other firm has added a non-lawyer business person to its Executive Committee and the CEOs of several firms utilize Bob Denney as their outside advisor.

Much has been written and said about change in the legal profession and “the New Normal” for law firms but little, if anything, about new approaches to managing a firm. Now, we believe, that time is coming.

Coming next month: Our annual report on “What's Hot and What's Not in the Legal Profession”

Robert Denney Associates Inc. has provided strategic management and marketing counsel to law firms, throughout the United States and parts of Canada for over 30 years. Recent Communiques, as well as information about our services, are posted on our web site www.robertdenney.com

P.O. Box 551, Wayne, PA 19087-0551 • 610-644-7020 • fax: 610-296-8726
email: bob@robertdenney.com • web site: www.robertdenney.com