

Litigation Support Guru

A Day in the Life

Join us in the world of Litigation Support

What is Litigation Support? Database Administrator

BY AMY BOWSER-ROLLINS ON April 16, 2013 IN WHAT IS LITIGATION SUPPORT

<http://litigationsupportguru.com>

This entry is Item 1 of 4 in the series What is Litigation Support?

A career in litigation support encompasses multiple careers. This series of articles will describe how each plays a part in litigation support.

Overall, litigation support can be described as:

We assist litigators.

We speak and translate geek.

We work with litigation discovery, primarily in electronic format.

One of the careers within litigation support is a Database Administrator. In this role, we design, maintain and manipulate databases within a variety of software solutions. We import data, export data, search data, convert data, report on data and transfer data from one media to another.

We manage document reviews that use databases which require database management. We categorize data within a database. We run searches and save them for reuse. We design database coding forms.

Document productions are another aspect of dealing with databases. Once the document review is complete, we export data from the database into a production format.

The database administrator role writes batch files and scripts to automate tasks. Some might have a specialty with SQL or C# programming languages.

A litigation support analyst is most likely handling the role of database administrator, but there are plenty of litigation support project managers that do their own database administration.



About Amy Bowser-Rollins

Amy is a Litigation Support Guru in the business of mentoring others in this niche career path. She is an Author, Speaker, Career Coach, Professor and eLearning Instructor. Amy is sharing a wealth of knowledge about a career in Litigation Support so that anyone who has the 10 traits needed for this career will gain a solid foundation to be able to pursue an entry-level position. If a Litigation Support career sounds interesting to you, subscribe today to keep in touch.

What is Litigation Support? Project Management

BY AMY BOWSER-ROLLINS ON May 1, 2013 IN WHAT IS LITIGATION SUPPORT

<http://litigationsupportguru.com>

This entry is Item 2 of 4 in the series What is Litigation Support?

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One of the careers within litigation support is a *Project Manager*. I would dare to say that this is probably the most difficult part of the job for a litigation support professional. It can be tough trying to manage multiple cases, each with a legal team of its own.

Personally, I think our industry has been over-using the term “project manager”. It has become difficult to discern exactly what the role entails at each service provider, law firm, government agency or corporation. In addition, I find that hiring managers are defining it differently during the interview and hiring process.

To me, the project manager is the person on the team that is most definitely client facing. The client can include the legal team as well as the actual client the lawyers represent. From a service provider’s point of view, the client might be a litigation support professional.

The project manager must be extremely organized and they must have excellent communication skills. It’s a given that the project manager must be able to multi-task. The project manager is the gatekeeper.

One of the key criteria for an excellent project manager is how they handle the negative situations. Are they trust worthy? Do they know when to push back? Do they own a mistake if it’s the right thing to do? Do they understand the importance of the timeline and can they relate that to others in their back office in a compelling, but respectful way?

A second key criteria is the project manager's ability to manage expectations of EVERYONE. If expectations are managed appropriately and proactively, the entire workflow will go so much smoother.

In my opinion, it is difficult to find an excellent project manager. When I find one, I hold on to them as long as I can. Make sure you tell your good project managers when they're doing a great job and take really good care of them.

I would like to single out a few of the best project managers I've known over the years and thank them for all of their hard work.

Melanie, Jamie, Sherry, Susan, Jeff, Brett, Kelly and Vipul, I can't thank you enough and I appreciate you more than you know!



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What is Litigation Support? Legal Technology Expert

BY [AMY BOWSER-ROLLINS](#) ON MAY 7, 2013 IN [WHAT IS LITIGATION SUPPORT](#)

<http://litigationsupportguru.com>

This entry is Item 3 of 4 in the series [What is Litigation Support?](#)

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Overall, litigation support can be described as:

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One of the careers within litigation support is a **Legal Technology Expert**. I would classify this role as the foundation for a Litigation Support Professional skillset. The knowledgebase for this foundation is expansive and complex. Although I can't cover every aspect of this role right now, I will break down the categories of knowledge required.

1) Litigation Discovery Process

A litigation support professional must have an understanding of the litigation discovery process. Since I covered this in a previous article, I will simply provide a [link to it here](#). I will add that the trick is knowing when to apply the legal technology within the discovery process.

2) Software and Hardware Tools

There are many software applications used in litigation support, some classic and some new. A litigation support professional will use Excel, Text Editors, Database Applications, Processing Tools,

Conversion Tools and Hosted Solutions. Even if there is no experience with a particular tool, there is knowledge gained through research, demonstrations and hands-on practice. The key is to have an awareness of the tools and when to use them. In addition to software, there are hardware tools. Many of these are discussed in the article series entitled [Tools of the Trade](#).

3) EDRM

There must be a thorough understanding of the Electronic Discovery Reference Model (EDRM). [Here is an article I wrote about it.](#)

4) Technical Requirements

This is a complex category to quantify. There are basic technical criteria when dealing with technology in general that becomes second nature and it is put to use when learning new technologies or when discussing the capabilities of a particular technology. You learn to know what makes sense and what doesn't. One example would be database field data types or data delimiters. A second example would be knowing various file formats and their limitations. Another example would be understanding the expected durations or timelines for each of the technologies.

5) eDiscovery Guidelines

There are some official guidelines with regard to working with electronic discovery that have either been put into place or just commonly accepted in the industry. There are federal court rules in place, but very few rules at the lower court levels. Then there are the unofficial guidelines that are followed by some and not by others. Basically, a litigation support professional needs to have an understanding of what all of the various guidelines are and when they should be adhered to or when they can be considered subjective depending on the situation.

6) eDiscovery Processing

There is a fairly standard process these days for "processing" electronic discovery. From the point the data is collected, to the point where the data is made available for attorney review, there are a number of stages and options for each of those stages. Exceptions to this might be if there is proprietary data or unusual data which will cause strategy discussions to occur between technical folk and the attorneys. There are specific guidelines in "processing" electronic discovery and chain of custody is important. Quality checking and exceptions handling are key.

7) Scanning/Coding

A litigation support professional must understand the in's and out's of scanning hardcopy documents to include unitization and the coding of documents to include objective and subjective coding. [Here is an article I wrote about hardcopy unitization.](#)

8) Best Practices

As you can imagine, there are best practices when dealing with all of these categories. They are taught and learned over time. Researching and staying up to date with these categories of knowledge and what has worked for others in the industry is crucial.

9) Consulting

Another aspect to being a legal technology expert is the consulting that comes with the job. The knowledge gained in the categories mentioned above will need to be shared with the legal team in an accurate way. You'll need to learn how to communicate with attorneys by remembering what a litigator does for a living and that we are here to assist them. I believe the best way, in the beginning, to learn how to consult is to shadow a senior team member. Here is an article I wrote about [shadowing](#) and another article I wrote about [how to be successful working with law firm partners](#).



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What is Litigation Support? Help Desk / IT Support

BY [AMY BOWSER-ROLLINS](#) ON MAY 17, 2013 IN [WHAT IS LITIGATION SUPPORT](#)

This entry is Item 4 of 4 in the series [What is Litigation Support?](#)

[What is Litigation Support? Database Administrator](#)

[What is Litigation Support? Project Management](#)

[What is Litigation Support? Legal Technology Expert](#)

[What is Litigation Support? Help Desk / IT Support](#)

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One of the careers within litigation support is *Help Desk and IT Support*. This role involves many facets of a typical IT department in a legal environment. If you were to walk into an IT department, you would see a [Help Desk](#), an Application Specialist, the Network Engineers and so on.

In Litigation Support, we provide IT services within our niche world of software and hardware. We primarily support users within the litigation practice group.

Some examples of the skill sets involved in this role are:

- customer service skills
- appropriate prioritization of incoming requests
- the ability to identify when a “sense of urgency” is required
- installing software
- troubleshooting software and hardware

- copying data from one media type to another such as server to server, server to DVD server to external hard drive or uploading/downloading data via [FTP](#)
- remote desktop usage which includes remoting to another desktop, remoting to a server or remoting to a user's machine
- setting up laptops for the attorneys
- organizing data on a server, creating network shares, backing up data
- creating encrypted containers or hard drives
- troubleshooting weird technology issues
- hand-holding the users
- answering questions about the use of technology

I simply can't list all of the areas where IT skills come in handy for a litigation support professional. Suffice it to say that the job requires technical skills at all levels. These skills can be learned if the aptitude is there.

Personally, I have learned so much from my IT colleagues. My advice is to treat them with respect. You need them in your corner. I ask them questions about their world and knowledge because it helps me when situations arise in my world. For instance, I remember mentioning to our very smart data guy in IT that we (in lit support) copy data all day long from one location to another and even from one office to another. Next thing I know, he is offering to put my team on their own subnet within our network. Performance improved and my team was happy! Thanks Don K.!



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What is Litigation Support? Vendor Management

BY [AMY BOWSER-ROLLINS](#) ON JUNE 3, 2013 IN [WHAT IS LITIGATION SUPPORT](#)

This entry is Item 5 of 5 in the series [What is Litigation Support?](#)

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One of the careers within litigation support is **Vendor Management**. This responsibility has several proactive components. For instance, it is a good idea to meet with service providers during your slower workload periods. These meetings will include a discussion about their latest and greatest offerings and perhaps a software demo. It is our responsibility to keep up to date on the industry trends.

One important topic of discussion should be their pricing. The pricing discussion could (and probably should) turn into a negotiation. We usually have a handful of service providers that we rotate between. It makes it much easier on us if the pricing models are similar across our preferred service providers. This enables us to give estimates “off the top of our head” to a partner if we have done our homework and preparation with the service providers ahead of time.

Another example of being proactive with service providers is regarding communication during a very active project. We should request status updates from the service provider **before** the attorney asks us for an update. That means we need to request status updates several times a day and then proactively share those updates with the legal team. This in turn will cut down on the amount of questions from the legal team because they will begin to expect your updates and will wait for them to arrive in their Inbox.

Vendor management includes knowing what the service providers offer in each of the service categories so when the need arises we know who to contact. It may also involve requesting RFPs from several service providers and providing a comprehensive apples-to-apples summary of services and pricing to the partner, who will in turn present it to their client.

Managing relationships with service providers can be stressful. There can be good times and bad times. Things can go wrong. Hopefully they won't. Remember to treat your service providers with respect — do not throw them under the bus with your legal team. It is your responsibility to hire quality service providers. Do your homework; get references from your colleagues.

During a busy project, the management of several service providers concurrently can get a little chaotic. Don't forget to document your requests in writing via e-mail so that you can refer back to them at a later date.



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What is Litigation Support? Marketer and Speaker

By Amy Bowser-Rollins on July 14, 2013 in What is Litigation Support

<http://litigationsupportguru.com>

This entry is Item 6 of 8 in the series What is Litigation Support?

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Two careers within litigation support are Marketing and Speaking. The marketing aspect comes into play because we usually need to market our services to the attorneys. We need to remind them that we exist and what services we can provide.

One way that we can market the litigation support department is to schedule a presentation to a particular practice group. One thing I used to do is get on the agenda for an upcoming monthly practice group meeting. They are meeting anyway and lunch is provided. I would give a 30 minute presentation and answer any questions they might have. The presentation would discuss the types of services and the types of software that are available to them as well as the consulting we can provide.

One year I got permission to attend the litigation retreat which was off-site at local resort. It was a weekend event. All of the litigators in the firm were coming together. We scheduled a mini-tech show that included educational panels, including some litigators that had used our services. I also arranged for a large room full of service provider booths. The attorneys could walk through and ask any questions they had.

We are always marketing our services whenever we can, in small ways, like dropping in on a partner in their office and asking how their cases are going. In listening to the types of cases the legal teams are working on, it can provide an opportunity to mention how we helped another legal team with a similar case. Basically, staying in front of the litigators helps our business. At my small firm right now, when we moved our office into a more central location in the firm and we starting getting more business. Sometimes the attorneys can forget we exist, especially if they've never used our services before.

Another avenue I took at one time was that I got on the list of orientation meetings with new litigators that joined the firm. Typically, their first two days consist of meetings with Human Resources, Accounting, the Librarian, etc. I got the opportunity to tell them during their first week at the firm what services we provide.

In terms of speaking, some of the examples I provided above will require the litigation support professional to speak in front of a room of people. This can be nerve racking if you're not used to it. But it is the best way to get practice before you speak at an industry conference one day. The other way that speaking skills comes in handy is when we are asked to attend an in-person meeting or a conference call with the client. We must be able to articulate well and sound confident.



About Amy Bowser-Rollins

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What is Litigation Support? Trainer

By Amy Bowser-Rollins on August 11, 2013 in What is Litigation Support

This entry is Item 7 of 8 in the series What is Litigation Support?

<http://litigationsupportguru.com>

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One of the careers within litigation support is a **Trainer**. We can be considered trainers in a few different ways.

- 1) Software training in a classroom environment – This is where we occasionally hold training classes on various software used in litigation matters and we invite attorneys and paralegals to attend.
- 2) Case related software training – In this scenario, there is a specific litigation matter that requires the use of a database. This training can be 1:1 training with an attorney or a paralegal in their office, or it could be with the entire legal team (attorneys and paralegals) in a conference room with a projector, or it could be with a group of attorneys assigned to review documents and the training will most likely take place in a conference room with a projector. I have found 1:1 training with attorneys to be the best.
- 3) Training a new associate or paralegal – Another situation where training is required is when a new associate or paralegal is hired and they have never worked on an eDiscovery matter before. They don't know any of the lingo we use or the procedures we follow. As a litigation support professional, we sometimes need to help educate them about the process as the case progresses.
- 4) Training a team member – When a new team member in litigation support is hired, it is a good idea for them to shadow one or more team members. This is another opportunity for your trainer skills to come into play.



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What is Litigation Support? Trial Presentation

By Amy Bowser-Rollins on September 26, 2013

<http://litigationsupportguru.com>

This entry is Item 8 of 8 in the series [What is Litigation Support?](#)

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One of the careers within litigation support is ***Trial Presentation***. In this role, we help litigators prepare for trial and we assist them during the trial. There are many logistical aspects in preparing for a trial that will make the use of technology in the courtroom.

For instance, all of the exhibits, video clips or audio clips are prepared using trial presentation software. The two most popular software products are [TrialDirector](#) and [Sanction](#). There can be many hours of preparation time creating annotated versions and callouts of items the attorney plans to present at trial, as well as presentation rehearsals.

Other aspects of preparation can involve coordinating logistics with the courthouse, setting up a war room at a location near the courthouse and preparing backup copies of all documents, databases, etc. so the legal team can function without internet access if it becomes necessary.

This role can be an exciting one because you get very involved in why the litigation case exists in the first place and you get a lot of exposure to the parties on both sides. However, you must be able to handle stress well because everyone on the legal team has a heightened level of stress during the trial phase because everything is on the line on behalf of the client.

Here are some photos of a mock electronic courtroom to give you an idea of how the technology is set up.



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