

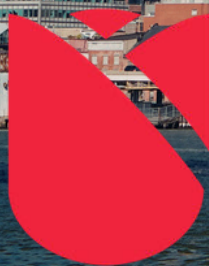


US LEGAL MARKET

QUARTERLY BRIEFING

**US LEGAL
MARKET:
Q1 2026**

Prepared by
EDEN ROSE USA



A MARKET THAT'S **ACTIVE**, BUT NOT FORGIVING



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The U.S. legal market continues to look strong on the surface. Demand remains high, firms are busy, and hiring hasn't stopped. But underneath, the tone has shifted.

This is no longer a broad hiring market—it's a selective one.

Firms are still growing, but with far more discipline. Hiring is targeted, fast-moving, and tied closely to immediate commercial impact. The shift is clear: we've moved from expansion to optimization.

The lateral market remains the primary engine. Partner hiring is at a multi-year high, but it's increasingly strategic—focused on portable books, niche expertise, and teams that can deliver from day one. At the

associate attorney level, demand is still there, but more uneven. Top-tier talent continues to see strong opportunity, while the broader market is tightening.

Technology is accelerating this divide. AI is no longer theoretical, it's influencing hiring decisions today. Firms are prioritizing lawyers who can operate alongside technology, not just around it.

At the same time, client pressure is building. Legal departments are more cost-conscious, more selective, and more willing to challenge traditional billing models. That pressure is feeding directly into hiring decisions.

The result is a market that feels busy but constrained. High demand for the right people, limited tolerance for risk, and very little room for error.

This is still a good market. But it's not an easy one.

Partner hiring hit a
five-year high in
2025, with more
than 3,000 lateral
additions across
major firms

MARKET INSIGHTS

The Future Isn't Freeing Us **- It's Rearranging Us**

Technology isn't reducing effort, it's redistributing it. From AI-assisted workflows to self-service systems, professionals are increasingly managing the outputs of automation rather than being replaced by it.

For law, this raises a critical question: As routine work compresses, does value shift toward judgment, interpretation, and client advisory?



[Read more →](#)



[Read more →](#)

The Danger of Being a “Job Hugger” **in Law**

In today's legal market, staying put can feel like stability—but often it's hesitation.

Strategic lateral movement is now normalized. What's changed is the risk profile:

- Stagnation limits earning potential
- Skills can plateau
- Market relevance can quietly decline

The strongest careers are increasingly built on leverage and optionality—not tenure alone.

PE Rebound Fueling a Surge **in US Legal Recruitment**

A resurgence in private equity activity is reshaping hiring across U.S. law firms.

With deal activity rebounding sharply, firms are scaling transactional teams—particularly in M&A, finance, and private capital. But hiring remains highly selective, with a clear focus on specialists who can operate in complex, high-value deal environments.

The implication is clear: Demand is rising—but precision hiring is here to stay.



[Read more →](#)

For deeper insight into any of these trends, connect with the Eden Rose USA team.

PODCAST HIGHLIGHTS:

THE **DEEP** DIVE



The Deep Dive #01: Recruiters & Hiring Managers — Turning Friction into a Strategic Talent Partnership

Where hiring breaks down isn't usually talent—it's alignment. This episode explores how recruiters and hiring managers can move from transactional interactions to genuine partnership, and why that shift is critical to hiring success.

→ [Listen here](#)

The Deep Dive #02: The Shifting Legal Market — Hot Practice Areas, AI Literacy & The Fight for Talent in 2026

From AI literacy to the rise of mid-level talent demand, this episode breaks down the structural changes shaping the legal profession—and what firms and attorneys need to do to stay competitive.

→ [Listen here](#)

The Deep Dive #03: The Reality of Legal Recruitment in 2026 — Agility, Pricing Pressure & the Race for Talent

A faster, more pressured market is emerging. We explore the “10-day hiring sprint,” pricing pressure from clients, and why career strategy now requires more agility than ever.

→ [Listen here](#)

OUR FEATURED ROLES



Employment Litigation Associate

LA

\$225k - \$300k + bonus
Leading global firm - High-value employment disputes & advisory work with top-tier clients



Funds Associate

NY

\$375k+



Trademark/Copyright Litigation Associate

CA, NY

\$300k - \$450k
Directed to litigating trademark and copyright matters



Patent Associate

CA, DC, MA, NY, TX

\$225k - \$325k

Directed to litigating patent matters in high technology sectors



Capital Market Associate

NYC

\$200k - \$300k



Employment Law Associate

San Diego

\$230k - \$360k + bonus

Am Law 100 firm - Litigation, advisory & regulatory employment work across complex employer-side matters

EDEN ROSE USA: Q1 UPDATES

It's been a busy few months for us at Eden Rose USA as we continue specialization across Corporate, Litigation, IP, and Labour & Employment. This has included expanding our team with two strategic hires: **Jamie Finch** and **Michael Daya-Winterbottom**.

We are continuing our ongoing focus on building deeper, candidate-led networks across key legal markets



Jamie Finch

Labour and
Employment
[Connect with Jamie](#)



**Michael Daya-
Winterbottom**

Corporate and
Capital Markets
[Connect with Michael](#)

CONTACT US



Eden Rose is a boutique legal recruitment firm based in New York City, built on a candidate-first approach. By working exclusively with high-caliber attorneys, we connect leading law firms with talent that is often not visible on the open market.

This briefing is intended as a perspective on market dynamics, not a definitive view. If you'd like to discuss any of the themes covered, we're always open to a conversation.

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