



US LEGAL MARKET

QUARTERLY BRIEFING

**US LEGAL
MARKET:
Q3 2026**

JULY - SEPTEMBER

Prepared by
EDEN ROSE USA

US LEGAL RECRUITMENT MARKET: **THE RECRUITER VIEW**



If there is one phrase that sums up Q3 for us, it is **“selective but still moving.”**

The US legal market has certainly become more measured over the last 12 months, but reports of a quiet market are, in our view, overstated. Good lawyers are still moving, firms are still hiring, and at partner level we continue to see firms prepared to make significant investments where the strategic fit is right.

What has changed is the level of scrutiny around every hire. Firms want to know exactly what a lateral brings to the table, while candidates are becoming increasingly selective about the opportunities they will consider.

Our Top 10 observations from Q3:

1. Quality is winning over quantity - Firms aren't necessarily looking to grow headcount for growth's sake. They're hiring where there is a clear business need and that has made the market more competitive for the best candidates.

2. Good associates are still very much in demand
- Strong academics, excellent training and quality

experience remain the fundamentals. Lawyers who can demonstrate that they are already operating at the level required by their target firm continue to attract attention.

3. 3rd – 8th year remains a sweet spot - For many firms, this level offers the ideal combination of experience, autonomy, and future potential. We continue to see good opportunities for associates who have developed a clear area of expertise.

4. Specialism is becoming increasingly valuable - Across both contentious and transactional practices, firms are looking for lawyers who can fill a particular need rather than simply add another pair of hands. Specialist expertise can make a significant difference.

5. Partner hiring remains strategic - The partner market continues to be driven by growth. Firms are looking for individuals who can bring clients, revenue, teams, specialist expertise or provide access to a new market.

6. But the “book of business” conversation has become more sophisticated - A headline number isn't enough. Firms are looking closely at the quality of relationships, sustainability of revenue, profitability, team structure, and the potential to build further.

7. Firms are increasingly willing to buy rather than build - Lateral hiring allows firms to establish or strengthen a practice far more quickly than organic growth. We expect this to remain an important part of the US legal recruitment market, particularly at partner level.

8. Candidates are asking better questions - Money remains important, but it isn't always the deciding factor. We are increasingly hearing questions around platform, culture, progression, quality of work, flexibility and particularly at partner level, whether the firm can genuinely help grow the practice.

9. AI is changing the conversation, not eliminating the need for lawyers - Technology and AI are increasingly part of the discussion around efficiency and future-proofing practices. For candidates, demonstrating technological awareness alongside strong legal and commercial skills is becoming increasingly relevant.

10. Q4 should be about execution - We expect the market to remain selective, but that doesn't mean firms won't move quickly. When a lawyer ticks the right boxes, the firms that can make decisions quickly are likely to have the advantage.

What we're hearing from the market - The message we're getting from both sides is remarkably consistent:

“We're hiring but we need to know exactly why.”

For firms, the emphasis is on strategic hires and demonstrable return on investment.

For associates, it's about being able to show why your experience matters and what you can contribute immediately.

For partners, the conversation is broader: clients, revenue, team, reputation, specialism, and importantly future growth.

Looking Ahead

Our expectation for Q4 is therefore cautious optimism.

We don't expect the market to return to the volume-driven hiring environment of previous years. Instead, we expect continued movement around the best candidates, with firms remaining disciplined but willing to invest where there is a compelling business case.

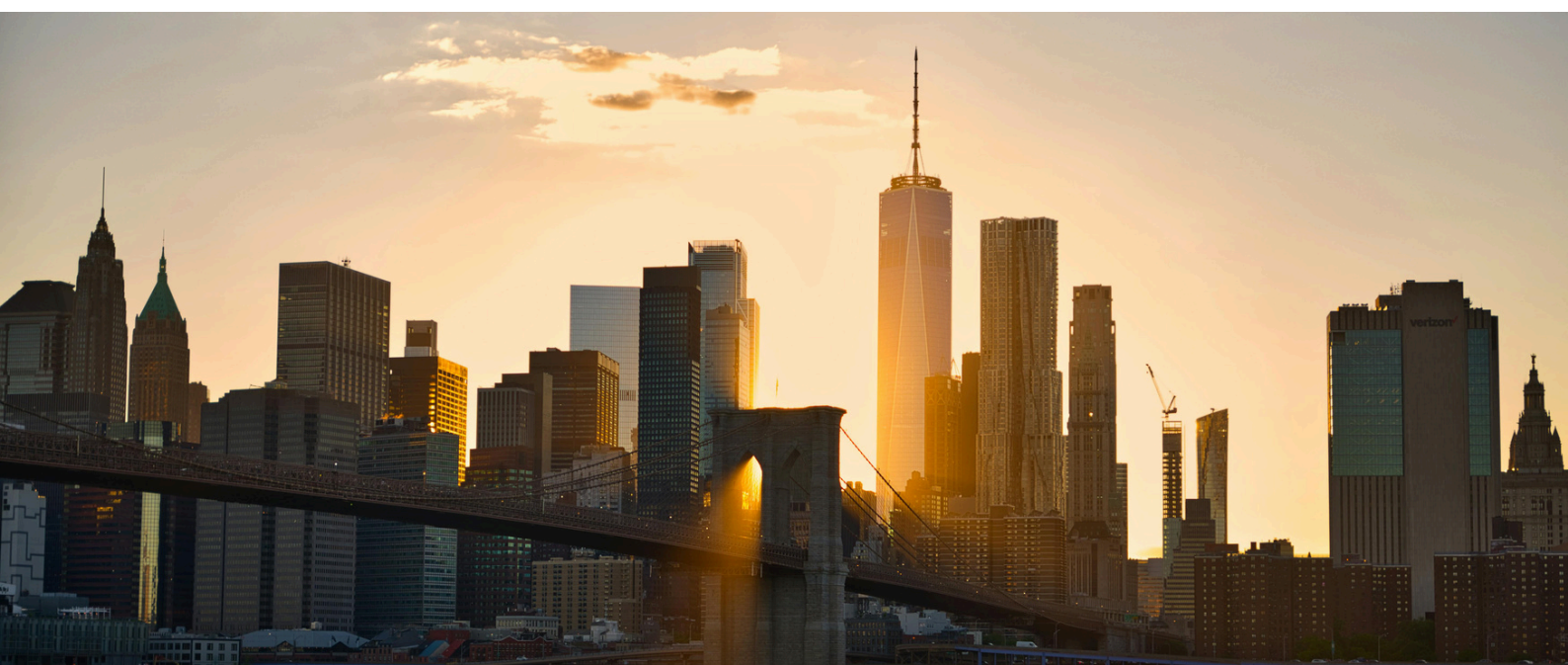
For candidates considering a move, the message is simple:

The market is there, but preparation matters.

And for firms, the same applies in reverse: the best people are still available, but they are unlikely to remain available for long once the right opportunity comes along.

In short:

Q3 wasn't about fewer opportunities. It was about better-defined opportunities.



MARKET INSIGHTS

Why Experienced Labor & Employment Lawyers Are in **High Demand in 2026**

The Labor & Employment market continues to be one of the most active areas of the U.S. legal sector, with firms continuing to invest in their Employment practices and seek experienced attorneys who can provide both legal expertise and practical commercial advice.

The reason is simple: the workplace is changing.



[Read more →](#)

5 Trends **Shaping Legal Recruitment** in 2026

The legal market never stands still, and 2026 is proving to be another year of evolution. While demand for top legal talent remains strong, the way firms attract, assess and retain lawyers is changing.

Here are 5 trends we're seeing shape the legal recruitment market this year.



[Read more →](#)

The AI Paradox: Why Experienced IP Lawyers May Become Hot Commodities

Will AI promote a shift in hiring more experienced IP lawyers? AI is rapidly changing the economics of IP practice. Patent and trademark searches, claim charts, office action responses, prior art analyses, and even patent and trademark application drafts can increasingly be generated or accelerated by AI.

Will AI make experienced IP lawyers more attractive and valuable?



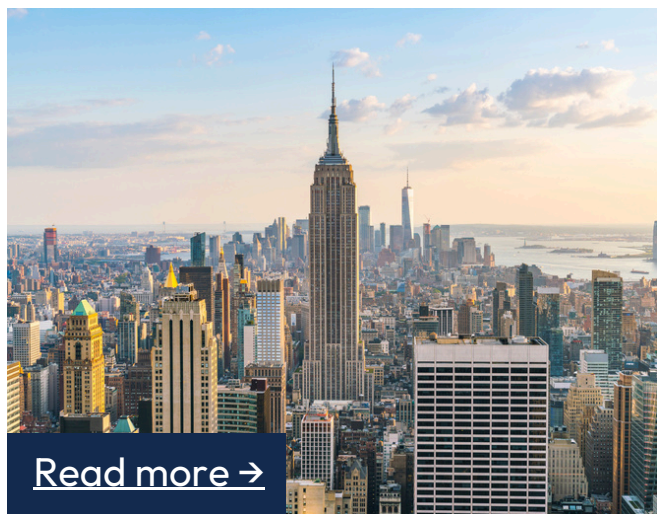
[Read more →](#)

For deeper insight into any of these trends, [connect with the Eden Rose USA team.](#)

The L&E Lateral Market in 2026: **Why the Right Fit Matters More** **Than Ever**

The Labor & Employment legal market continues to be one of the more active areas of the U.S. legal market in 2026.

Demand remains strong, firms are continuing to grow their Employment practices, and experienced L&E attorneys remain highly sought after.



[Read more →](#)

Building Resilient IP Teams: **Retention Starts Before the** **Offer**

Building a successful Intellectual Property practice isn't just about winning clients but ultimately relies on the importance of attracting and retaining exceptional attorneys.

Firms that consistently outperform recognize that resilience comes from intentional hiring, strong leadership, and long-term investment in people. Retention begins long before an offer is extended.



[Read more →](#)

Will There Be a Robotax in **Answer to Increasing AI and** **Automation Trends?**

8 years ago we explored whether there will be a robotax in answer to increasing AI and automation trends, we revisited the article to see how right, or wrong we were.

AI doesn't need to replace lawyers to dramatically change the number of lawyers a law firm needs, the seniority mix, the economics of leverage, or what constitutes a junior lawyer's job.

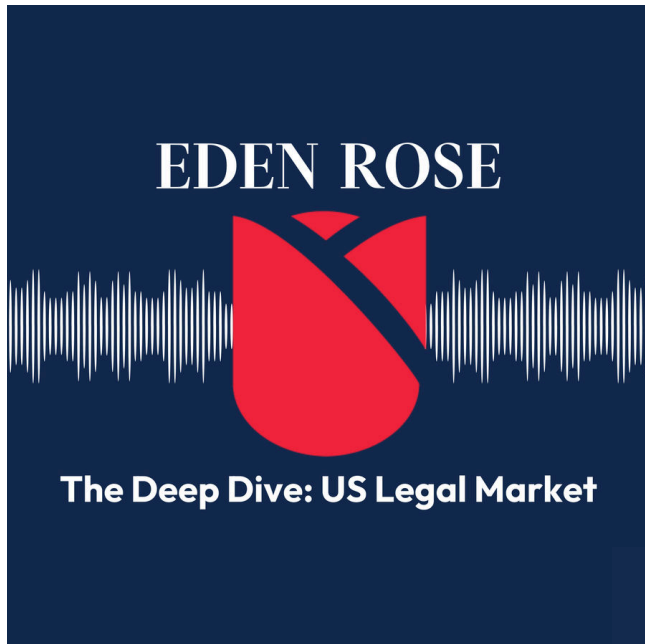


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PODCAST HIGHLIGHTS:

THE **DEEP** DIVE



The Deep Dive #06: The Hidden Legal Talent Market — Where the Best Attorneys Are Really Hired

The best legal talent isn't always looking for a new role, and the best opportunities rarely make it to a job board. In this episode, we explore the hidden legal talent market and why some of the most successful hires happen long before a position is ever advertised.

[→ Listen here](#)

The Deep Dive #07: The Private Equity Rebound — How the Deal Market Is Reshaping Legal Careers

Private Equity is back—and it's reshaping the legal hiring market. This episode breaks down how the resurgence of Private Equity is driving one of the biggest shifts in legal recruitment in recent years.

[→ Listen here](#)

The Deep Dive #08: The Future of Legal Careers — Why Stability Is No Longer the Safe Option

The traditional legal career path is changing—and so are the expectations of the attorneys building it. In this episode, we explore how the definition of career success in the legal profession is evolving. From changing attitudes toward work-life balance to the rise of legal technology and alternative career paths, we examine why the old blueprint for success is no longer the only option.

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OUR FEATURED ROLES



Patent Litigation Counsel

Multiple locations: CA,
FL, IL, MA, NY, TX, DC
\$315k



IP/Tech Transactions Associate

Multiple locations: CA, NY, MA
\$245k - \$410k



V50 Law Firm - M&A Associate

NYC
\$235k - \$355k



Legal AI Firm - Founding Real Estate Associate

SF or Remote
\$250k-\$300k



AM Law 200 - Corporate & Funds Associate

Atlanta
\$180k - \$220k



Employment Litigation Associate

Boston, MA
\$240k - \$270k

EDEN ROSE USA: Q3 UPDATES

Over the last Quarter Eden Rose has supplied talent into the AM Law 50, moved experienced Partners to grow in new firms, secured great career moves for Associates in IP, Labor & Employment, Corporate within Mid Law and Boutiques.

We are also currently doing work within L&E, we're working across everything from Associate-level searches through to Partner moves, while also developing more specialist

areas such as ERISA / Employee Benefits and Traditional Labor.

But, it's not always about recruitment at Eden Rose, we've been helping an investment funds boutique law firm with the mapping and growth of a new practice, "it's not always about placements, but laying the foundation for future successes", working with our Clients to assist them with their growth plans.



EDEN ROSE

Specialist Legal Recruitment

At Eden Rose, we believe successful recruitment is about more than matching a resume to a vacancy. It is about understanding people, practices, and what makes a move commercially and professionally right for both sides.

Our specialist teams work exclusively within the legal market, bringing deep sector knowledge, established networks, and a highly consultative approach. We work with leading law firms, partners, counsel and associates across the US to identify opportunities and talent that align with long-term ambitions.

SPECIALIST EXPERTISE

Our expertise spans a broad range of high-value legal practices, including:



M&A, Funds, Capital Markets & Tax

Connecting leading firms with lawyers who bring the technical expertise, commercial awareness and client relationships required to support sophisticated transactional practices and strategic growth.



US Labor & Employment, ERISA & Employee Benefits

Specialising exclusively in the US legal market, with extensive networks across California, Texas, Florida, New York, the Midwest and Southeast. We recruit from Associate through Counsel and Partner level, including lateral hires and strategic practice growth.



Intellectual Property

Recruiting across Patent, Trademark, Copyright, Trade Secret and transactional IP roles. Our specialist IP recruitment expertise is strengthened by a unique combination of engineering, legal, USPTO and IP recruiting experience, allowing us to understand both the technical and legal requirements of sophisticated IP practices.



Litigation

Supporting firms and lawyers across Commercial, Complex, Employment, Antitrust and Insurance litigation.

Recruitment Built Around Understand

Our approach is deliberately personal and consultative.

We take the time to understand what our clients actually need, not simply the job description, but the wider commercial objectives behind the hire. Whether a firm is looking to strengthen an existing practice, develop a new capability or bring in a partner with a portable book of business, we understand the factors that can determine whether a hire genuinely adds value.

For candidates, we take the same approach. We look beyond title and compensation to understand what really matters: practice fit, partnership prospects, business development opportunities, work allocation, geographic flexibility, platform and long-term career progression.

Eden Rose connects exceptional legal talent with the firms and platforms where they can make a meaningful, long-term impact. US Legal Recruitment. Strategically Delivered.



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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