

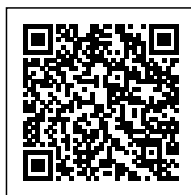
# DELAYED RESPONSES FROM FIRMS AFFECT CLIENTS' BUSINESS

*Posted on 10/11/2015*



Category: [Uncategorized](#)

Tag: [cat-clientview](#)



**Law firms that show a sense of urgency will have the advantage when it comes to winning legal work because quick response times are crucial, says Indra's Luís Graça Rodrigues**

Delays in law firms providing legal advice can have significant consequences for their clients, according to Luís Graça Rodrigues, regional counsel at Indra in Portugal. "Time is the main issue when it comes to external legal advice and my priority is fast responses from law firms," he explains. "What upsets me most from legal advisers is when law firms do not stick to agreed schedules and take too long to provide answers – that may affect our company's business and can cause major delays in projects."

Rodrigues adds that, while he expects all legal advisers to have experience and expertise, it is the ability to combine those with a sense of urgency to provide timely advice that is the key to winning legal work. He says that it is “rare to find all three of these qualities together in a law firm”. Rodrigues believes that some firms have come under more pressure during the economic crisis and have consequently been forced to reduce headcounts – he adds that this results in firms trying to do more work with fewer lawyers, which can compromise their ability to provide quick and succinct responses.

### **Giving feedback**

“When I find a law firm that does not provide a satisfactory service, I am very direct in telling them once I get the invoice,” Rodrigues claims. “In my experience Indra would also think twice about using them again.” As such, Rodrigues insists on having a cap on external legal fees. “It is important to have a cap in place so I know what the maximum costs will be,” he says. “If law firms take too long on a matter then it is only to their disadvantage.”

That said, Rodrigues acknowledges that the international nature of Indra's business requires some flexibility because of the different cultural approaches and logistics that exist in different countries. To this end, he expects law firms to co-ordinate overseas advice. “Working in the US and Europe is different to working in Africa,” Rodrigues says. “If a Portuguese firm is taking too long, I can call them or drive round to their offices in Lisbon and complain – I can't do that in Mozambique or Angola, the legal systems and civil codes are very similar but cultural, logistical and communications infrastructure differ so advisers may not be so readily available.”

Rodrigues says that his role covers Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, such as Angola, Mozambique and Cape Verde. In Portugal, he provides most of the advice relating to commercial, TMT, procurement and employment matters for example, with the company mainly outsourcing litigation work. African countries require more external counsel because the legal work is coordinated from the company's headquarters in Europe.

### **Researching the market**

However finding legal counsel in unfamiliar jurisdictions is not always easy, according to Rodrigues. “It can be a challenge to find external law firms in certain markets,” he observes. “For instance, we had not worked with any law firm in Cape Verde so we had to research the various firms, consulted the legal ranking directories and also ask other law firms.”

While Indra does not have a legal panel, it does have a list of preferred law firms based on the company's previous experiences working with them. Rodrigues points out that the list is quite long because it does not just include firms in Portugal, but also firms recommended by Indra's in-house lawyers around the world. From Rodrigues' perspective, he highlights F. Castelo Branco & Associados and Cuatrecasas, Gonçalves Pereira as firms he likes to work with in Portugal and Angola respectively.

According to Rodrigues, there are plenty of incentives for law firms to do a good job and get onto Indra's preferred list because the company likes to have long-term relationships with its external advisers. He adds: “We try to keep costs down by providing external firms with more than one instruction and working with them throughout the course of the year. This means we can say to law firms that Indra will provide a certain amount of work so that, while fees may be lower, the volume of work is higher.”

### **Luís Graça Rodrigues is regional counsel at Indra in Portugal**