

GROWTH OF LEGAL HIRING IN TIER 2 INDIAN CITIES

Written by Yashna Ray

Over the last few years, legal hiring in tier 2 cities in India has grown at a steady pace in law firms and in-house departments alike. Previously, if you were a legal practitioner outside of the Mumbai-Delhi-Bengaluru triangle, your profile was likely limited to being a litigation specialist. Now, we are seeing law firms with ever burgeoning practices and many corporates are setting up legal departments in a variety of practice areas.

The top 5 cities that have seen a rise in legal hiring are:

1. Pune
2. Chennai
3. Kolkata
4. Hyderabad
5. Ahmedabad

This growth can be attributed to a variety of reasons:

Better Infrastructure:

The tier 1 cities have been facing a certain amount of saturation, with limited real estate spaces and increasing land prices. With better, cheaper infrastructure and more prolific transport options

available in the country, movement of personnel for business has become much more economically viable compared with setting up offices in the costly tier 1 cities. These factors have led to a growing demand for real estate and in-house litigators.

Governmental Support:

The current central government has made business reform a central policy, and this idea has trickled down to the state governments as well. Some states have seen a big push to attract businesses to set up manufacturing plants and their support functions, throwing up legal and compliance specialist vacancies in large MNC's manufacturing and processing units.

Start-up Culture:

Bengaluru was a pioneer in this space, but now there are numerous start-ups spread across locations, with Hyderabad and Chennai leading the pack in new businesses in both the commercial and financial sector. Many newly established NBFC's are setting themselves up in the southern region. This has led



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Emerging Markets

to a growth in first time in-house legal hires, with an emphasis in dual generalist roles - legal as well as company secretary or compliance. In their initial phase start-ups usually look for a location that requires a modest capital investment, making tier 2 cities ideal. Along with cheaper real estate prices, they also offer talent that meets the cut and offer a unique insight of work conduct of the region.

Emerging Markets:

With the increasing online presence of businesses organisations have transcended physical state boundaries. Present day tier 2 cities offer a gateway to new markets, and have become the target audience businesses cannot ignore. From a legal stand point, this has given rise to issues that did not exist previously and has demanded a specialist work force to make sure businesses run seamlessly. A locally present legal setup goes a long way in helping this cause.

Hiring legal talent in tier 2 cities can have quite a few advantages for the employers as well.

New Talent Pool:

There are national law schools and esteemed private universities in many of tier 2 cities, and hiring top talent at a junior level has become fairly easy. This talent has an innate understanding of the local culture and know how to tackle situations keeping in mind the regional sentiments and can be the difference

between a deal breaker and a deal maker.

Lower Salary Expectations:

Living expenses are lower in tier 2 cities, therefore hiring lawyers, especially in support functions, is more economical for employers.

Regional Language Skills:

A large proportion of business is conducted in regional languages in local courts, and sourcing lawyers from the same region, with working regional language skills is very much on trend instead of having to outsource work to independent practitioners.

This hiring is not only at a junior or mid-level, there has been an increased demand in Head of Legal positions and senior lawyers with more than 8 years of experience across tier 2 cities as well. Many legal professionals are choosing to take up senior management roles in these locations, as is it a quicker path to new career heights than toiling away for years in middle management in the more competitive tier 1 cities. During 2017/2018 amongst the sectors that were quick to take advantage of tier 2 locations were IT/ITES services, manufacturing and banking & finance.

The government's emphasis on the development of tier-2 cities under smart city projects has paved the way for small scale businesses turning into mid-size firms and mid-sized firms entering into the big league. The resulting effect of these changes was recently

reflected in the World Bank's 'Ease of Doing Business Index', with India being ranked #100, jumping 30 spots ahead from the previous year. With such efforts being

made, we can anticipate more business functions choosing to move to tier 2 cities, thereby opening up a plethora of associated legal opportunities.

About the Author

Yashna is a Senior Consultant at Aquis Search, with the legal and compliance team in Mumbai. She recruits professionals for local, regional and global corporate governance roles including private practice lawyers, in-house legal counsel, company secretary and compliance.

She has experience working with clients to provide recruitment services and market intelligence across various sectors including financial services, media, pharmaceuticals, information technology and manufacturing. Prior to joining Aquis, Yashna worked in a boutique consultancy firm on legal recruitment in the in-house market in Mumbai and as a Trade Union Advocate in London.

Yashna holds an LLB (honours) from Cardiff University, United Kingdom, and a PGCE in Human Resource Management from Middlesex University, London. She is fluent in English, Bengali and Hindi, and conversational French.

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