



Firm aims to remove guesswork from trials

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Jury Impact knows its target audience.

Opening its second office in Baltimore's Inner Harbor last week, the Cost Mesa, Calif.-based national jury consulting firm specializing in legal trial services established a home on the East Coast.

Before the move, Jury Impact ran focus groups in the Baltimore/Washington area twice a month and has interviewed hundreds of local jurors for the University of Maryland Medical System and MedStar.

Spending more than \$200,000 in flights for 68 trials across the country, Jury Impact elected to open another office not only to expand its reach, but to help cut its travel costs.

"It was worth the investment to bring a team out here," Jury Impact President and Chief Executive Officer Chris St. Hilaire said. "We don't predict results, but we can help reshape cases by reframing them, making arguments more persuasive and intelligent to jurors."

Named a finalist by the American Business Awards for Most Innovative Company Up to 100 Employees in May, the firm makes its niche in the legal market by taking a different approach to trial practices.

Targeting a potential demographic of jurors, the company runs polls and focus groups to gather data. By presenting the facts and case in a straightforward, impartial manner, Jury Impact can learn about potential concerns or issues that a juror might have.

This means in that addition to lawyers, the company also employs political consultants, marketing experts and journalists to help with its research, St. Hilaire said.

"A lot of lawyers aren't trained in that, and in a bigger case with a client to support, it's a great resource," said Andrew Alperstein, an attorney in Baltimore who has defended high-profile clients such as Ravens defensive back B.J. Sams and former Oriole pitcher Sidney Ponson. "Most lawyers have theories about what types of juries they are looking at, but ultimately none of us are sociologists or psychologists, and the tools they use would benefit us."

Clients of Jury Impact include Hospital Corp. of America, Duke University, GE Insurance, AT&T and Wal-Mart.

"We have done everything from medical malpractice to asbestos to professional sports to business disputes," St. Hilaire said. "We can win any focus group you want us to by presenting biases, but that's not the information that we are after."