

The Inside Scoop: Powerful Women In-House Counsel Tell All

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Women in the Courts Task Force and Committee for Women in the Legal Profession

Moderator:

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TWO TOP 10 LISTS EVERY LAWYER SHOULD READ

Top 10 Tips For Career Advancement, Mentoring and Networking:

Career Advancement:

1. Be a risk taker and a dreamer – think about the job you want and might be good for, even if it is a leap from where you currently are.
2. By moving around to different jobs, you can obtain a broad base of experience that will make you a more valuable team member and leader.
3. Volunteer and join organizations that are not in areas where you are most active – this can give you different outlooks and expose you to new networks.
4. Government service is an avenue where you can get opportunities to manage and supervise other lawyers.
5. Take on projects that are outside of your comfort zone, and be open to doing different things.

Mentoring/Sponsorship:

6. There is value in the “virtual mentor” – people who you watch in court and read their papers. Every day there are opportunities to be mentored by very good lawyers around you in this less traditional sense.
7. Women should not eliminate men from the pool of potential sponsors.

8. Look for both professional and psychological mentors (i.e. people who can give you emotional support in the context of your career). Both types of mentors can be valuable.

Networking:

9. In-house counsel want to hear interesting speakers and attend events with substance.
10. Joining pro-bono activities and committees with in-house counsel are good ways to network. This way in-house counsel have the ability to assess how you actually work together.

Top 10 Tips For Getting Business From In-House Counsel:

1. Competence and responsiveness are key when evaluating outside counsel – whoever answers the phone first will get repeat business. Always respond by the end of the day.
2. Associates should have a good attitude. Do not make in-house counsel feel like they are adding to your burden.
3. Take the time to learn about the company you are doing work for.
4. Do not try to go over in-house counsel's head to get business.
5. Give in-house counsel recommendations on a path forward and practical solutions.
6. Remember that Human Resources and business people have work to do within the organization. Deal with these professionals in a respectful, diplomatic way when trying to gather information and documents.
7. Do not surprise in-house counsel. If circumstances change, keep in-house counsel informed.
8. Outside Counsel should communicate if they are going to be over budget.
9. Alternative fee arrangements are attractive – look for ways to make your law firm stand out in how you will provide value and keep expenses low.
10. In-house counsel expect firms to work smarter and strategically decide what work is important to do. For example, in a single plaintiff arbitration, a summary judgment motion may not make sense. Tailor your work to the case.