



Winning Business from Corporate Counsel

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Flexibility, Empathy, and Partnership are Traits that will Help Firms Woo Corporate Counsel



Let's face it. Companies around the country are scaling back, looking to outside law firms less - and their in-house legal teams more.

In-house lawyers and legal experts are in demand right now and that means competition is stiff in the fight to win their business.

So what's the best way to woo corporate counsel?

Make your firm as attractive as possible by following the advice of Erin Marie Daly and the experts featured in her article, [How to Woo In-House Counsel in 2011](#), for Law360.

The following is an excerpt.

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1. Be flexible in handling different fee structures.

It's all about getting the best services for the best price.

Pamela Woldow, general counsel at Edge International, advises offering suggestions to cash-strapped corporate legal departments that will help them broker a partnership with you.

“Make yourself indispensable!” she said. “Get with the new reality of in-house legal budgets and be prepared to talk about how you can help in-house counsel through fee arrangements that give them what they need: predictability and cost containment.”

Or, she suggested, offer to handle just one matter using your innovative approach to show how you can help with budget issues.

2. Partner with other firms.

Robert Henderson, a legal consultant at RJH Consulting, said that because the trend today is for corporate counsel to limit the number of outside counsel they deal with, smaller firms are at a competitive disadvantage in winning the beauty contest with corporate counsel.

“My advice to firms that have a limited practice focus — for example, securities litigation or white collar criminal defense — would be to seek to collaborate with larger firms that don't have expertise in their particular practice area,” he said. “In addition to their specialized expertise, boutique firms usually can offer more efficiency and lower cost due to their lower overhead.”

Another strategy, according to Olson, is to consider working together on a joint training program.

3. Bring a new perspective.

Susan Hackett, senior vice president and general counsel of the Association of Corporate Counsel, said creativity was at the top of the wish list for many corporate legal departments — and that law firms trying out new ideas are gaining traction.

For example, she said, firms focusing on how to deploy project and lean process management techniques are making a splash with clients.

4. Be helpful.

A sure way to get the attention of in-house counsel, according to Olson, is to go out of your way to offer resources.

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“Some firms have offered to 'second' an attorney to a client for a period of time, which helps the client get work done and helps the firm and the attorney learn about the client,” he said. “It doesn't have to be free, but free is nice. And don't send a brand new person whom we have to train.”

Or, Olson advised, simply offer to fix a problem that may be plaguing in-house attorneys. Corporate law departments, he said, may have chronic problems, but no resources or people to fix them — and that's where you come in.

5. Show them that you care.

According to Miriam Frank, partner and vice president of the in-house practice group at Major Lindsey & Africa, the law firm partner who makes every client feel that he or she is their most important client will continue to get business.

A little sensitivity can go a long way, she added. Everyone likes to feel that their needs are being recognized, Frank said, and corporate counsel are no different.

“Show some sensitivity to the pressures faced by in-house counsel,” she said. “The outside counsel who understands the dynamics of operating inside of a business — from cost-containment to accountability —and does all that he or she can to be supportive and make the client look good will be remembered and valued.”

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