

Considering Hiring a New General Counsel

Two Critical Components for a Successful Outcome

When hiring a new general counsel, it's essential to identify specific qualifications that will ensure the candidate is an ideal match on paper. As you craft the job description, consider the indispensable skills and the desirable attributes that will contribute to the success of the general counsel.



THE Math Test

No matter who you hire, there are specific requirements the selected general counsel will need to possess. As you develop a position description, consider the "must haves" and the "nice to haves" that will make for the most successful general counsel. Keeping in mind, the stronger the alignment with your legal needs, the greater the likelihood of selecting the ideal candidate for your company.

- ✓ **What are the current legal needs of the organization? What experience is required? What experience can be acquired?**
 - > Specific industry experience?
 - > Specific practice area experience?
 - > Domestic and/or International experience?
 - > Crisis management experience?
 - > Experience in a highly regulated industry?
 - > Using AI efficiently and effectively to support business goals?
 - > Board experience?
 - > Strategic leadership?
- ✓ **What are the organization's future business objectives that will require legal support?**
 - > Acquisition focused?
 - > International expansion?
 - > Planning for an IPO?
 - > New business development?
 - > Regulatory compliance framework?
- ✓ **How do you expect the GC to add value to the organization?**
 - > Strategic Thought Leadership?
 - > Business advisor?
 - > Practical, business and commercial minded legal solutions?
 - > Consigliere to the C-Suite?
- ✓ **What are the organization's expectations for the GC role?**
 - > Significant part of executive business leadership team - "with a seat at the table"?
 - > Breadth of role: Joint Legal and Compliance responsibility?
 - > Leadership or Overseeing M&A? Commercial Agreements? Finance? Real Estate?
 - > Board Related: Corporate Secretary function? SEC filings? Preparing for an IPO?
 - > Management, growth and training of legal team? HQ? OpCo's? Regions?
- ✓ **Relocation:**
 - > Considering the advantage of having a GC present within the C-Suite, how robust is your relocation package?
- ✓ **Return-to-Work: What are the expectations of the C-Suite? The General Counsel needs to align with the business.**
- ✓ **Compensation Package: Is your package competitive within your industry?**



THE Chemistry Test

After identifying the candidates who excel in "the math test," it's crucial to evaluate their cultural fit within the organization - what we call "the chemistry test." This involves ensuring strong alignment with the C-Suite, the Board and executive committee, the senior leadership team, and the legal team. It is essential not to underestimate the importance of cultural fit; it may ultimately be even more critical than achieving the highest score on your math test.

- ✓ **Executive Presence**
 - > Do they have "gravitas"?
 - > Do they listen more and talk less?
 - > Can they gain the confidence, trust and respect up, down and across the organization?
- ✓ **Leadership Style**
 - > Collaborative?
 - > Consensus builder?
 - > Diplomat?
 - > Decisive decision maker?
 - > Driver?
- ✓ **Personality Fit**
 - > With the C-suite/senior leadership team?
 - > With internal clients—business and operations?
 - > With legal team?
- ✓ **Communication Style**
 - > Open and direct engagement?
 - > In-person, virtual or email communication?
 - > Is there always a fire drill?
- ✓ **What type of environment do they work best in (e.g., open floor plan, open doors, open discussions/ lively interactions)?**
- ✓ **How do they go about problem solving?**
- ✓ **How would they describe themselves as a manager?**
- ✓ **How do they approach training, mentorship and development?**

In which type of work environment do they thrive? Seek language that accurately reflects your organization: Is it structured, formal, and hierarchical, or more open with brainstorming sessions and active interaction?

Crisis Management: It is common for a General Counsel to face various challenges. Please describe a crisis situation you were actively involved in resolving. What key lessons did you learn from this experience?

Engagement with the Board and/or Executive Committee: Please describe the methods you would use to build confidence, trust, and respect with these leaders.

Team Management: Describe how your management style has evolved over time. Highlight adaptability and strong leadership qualities.

Training, Mentorship, and Development: Describe how you effectively manage a team while providing development opportunities without increases in title or compensation.

Your primary goal when hiring a new general counsel should be to add expertise, dimension and perspective to the C-suite. The new GC needs to be able to establish credibility quickly and be viewed as a valued business partner, bringing deep knowledge and unique points of view to the organization. Your hiring process should be thoughtful and strategic, and by testing along the way, you will be primed to identify the best legal leader for your organization. 🌟

