



Best Practices in Client Service:

General Counsel: How Their Demands Are Changing and How to Prepare

Third Annual Law Firm Chief Marketing Officers' Forum, NorthStar Conferences

Panelists: Timothy B. Corcoran, LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbell
Kathleen Chagnon, Former SVP, General Counsel, Constellation Group
Dawn Haghghi, VP and Illinois Division Counsel, Charter One Bank, NA
Barbara Kolsun, SVP and General Counsel, Kate Spade LLC

On December 9, 2004, NorthStar Conferences held a two day event for Chief Marketing Officers in Washington DC. The first session was a panel discussion comprised of three general counsel, moderated by Tim Corcoran of LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbard, which yielded the following insights regarding how to build stronger relationships with in-house counsel:

- We are too busy to fill out a survey. It is a better use of our time to have a quarterly lunch to update you on how things are going...and never bill for it!
- It is important to build relationships with our junior people.
- If you have experience, provide support and insights on how to better manage our legal departments.
- Know with whom you are meeting. If you are meeting the business people, don't bypass the legal department, because it can kill the relationship.
- Understand the culture of the company and act in accordance with it. For example, if we treat our support staff with respect, do the same (e.g., write thank you notes to them).
 - Know our vocabulary. For example, do we say "colleagues" or "employees", do we see "problems" or "opportunities"?
 - Read the annual report and know what is on our web site.
 - When making a presentation to a retailer, don't show up wearing a competitor's clothing!
- One firm has a relationship manager from the marketing department assigned to the client. The manager developed a strategy to understand what the client wants, and works with the firm's attorneys to help them act in alignment with the strategy. The net result is a strategic partnership where the outside firm brings value and helps in house counsel look good inside their company.
- Respond completely to defined guidelines set forth by in house departments.
- Do not run up high expenses. Many in house general counsel are earning the equivalent of what a mid-level associate earns in a firm, so it is inappropriate to show extravagance.
- Write up a summary after a matter concludes.
 - We perceive high value in receiving advice on how to prevent future issues from arising.
- It is in our best interests to consolidate work in a smaller number of firms. Show us your capabilities in other areas.