



## **In-House Counsels Want This**

At the October 2015 LMA Legal Tech Conference in San Francisco, a panel of young in-house counsels provided great insight as to what they are seeking these days from outside law firms. It was fascinating listening to their express desire – almost demand – for their outside firms to send analytical, current and very relevant social media posts and to use technology to its fullest capacity making their lives easier. Each panelist offered targeted suggestions on how to best work with them and their companies.

The panelists included:

- Michael Haven, Senior Corporate Counsel Legal Operations & Litigation, NetApp
- Sharon Segev, VP, Corporate Development & General Counsel, Elo Touch Solutions
- Olga Mack, Head of Legal, ClearSide, Inc.
- Alexandra Sepulveda, Deputy General Counsel, Udemy

According to the panelists, the law firms they choose offer much more than the gateway entry of just having good legal expertise. Yes, spot on experience is one of the attributes required just like the fact that great service is expected. Truly knowing a client's business is also a given. But these general counsels say their expectations completely exceed these factors these days. "If you're going to be an effective advocate for us get in our shoes. You need to understand what we do, how we make our money and the risks we face. Your approach must be tailored to meet our goals."

"Technology makes you expect others to respond faster than ever. Responding within 24 hours is the low bar. In-house counsels are looking for quick ease of communication with their outside firms."

One of the technologies viewed as critical by the panel is Slack, an instant messaging program. Some stated they wouldn't even consider working with a law firm that did offer Slack. They told us that firms also need to offer billing software that allows in-house attorneys to track outside law firm billing along the way. Some have a requirement that billing must be up to date within three business days. This enables them to stay on budget and to see how matters are progressing. Most of the panelists are requiring digital signing, "Don't send me paper to sign or even a PDF. And don't fight me on using Serengeti."

Having a completed and up to date social profile is a go/no-go gateway issue for these panelists. "If you do not have one, you are not seen as relevant."

They enjoy receiving up-to-the-minute social media posts with a large caveat. Any information coming their way must be pinpointed to each counsel's exact area of expertise and be very relevant to their specific job within the company. "In a world of volume and noise we often judge a book by its cover. Your social media posts provide a preview of your services and depth of knowledge. Don't waste my time."

This LinkedIn post was written by Olga Mack, Head of Legal, ClearSide, Inc., after her participation on the panel: <http://ow.ly/TBlmh> Check it out for great details on her thoughts about these issues.

When sending emails to in-house counsel, according to one panel member, make sure there is one quick sentence that explains why the email was written and if it needs to be read right away. Comment on any attachment's relevancy and stating when attachments need to be reviewed.

An increasing number of younger in-house counsels say that law firms need to take heed of the changing service culture and internal landscape with their client companies. In summary, they all agreed that outside firms should stay on the changing edge of technology and provide in-house attorneys with up to the minute great but short uber relevant content.

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