KILPATRICK TOWNSEND

4 KEY TAKEAWAYS

In-House Lawyers' Expectations of Outside Counsel

Kilpatrick Townsend's First Chairs Club recently presented "In-House Lawyers' Expectations of Outside Counsel." Not all legal departments are the same. Not all clients are identical. But what makes good outside counsel never changes. In-house Lawyers' Shola Omojokun (Labor & Employment Legal at Chick-Fil-A, Inc.) and Adriana Perez (Assistant Vice President-Senior Legal Counsel, Litigation at AT&T) spoke about their expectations of outside counsel. Kilpatrick Townsend's Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer Yendelela Neely Holston moderated the discussion and added insight from her time as Assistant Vice President-Senior Legal Counsel at AT&T.

Four key takeaways from the presentation include:

1

What in-house counsel wants from outside litigation counsel (generally)

- Remember that as litigators, our #1 job is to solve a problem. As outside counsel, take the "problem" part out of the equation for inside counsel. Help the client define their expectations and ultimate goals for the matter, and then take full ownership of the case and give confidence to in-house counsel that the "problem" is being handled.

Communication

- Define expectations and goals from the beginning of a matter. Spend time with the in-house counsel to define the client's expectations and goals, as well as the work styles and preferences of the particular in-house attorney(s) you are working with.
- Send in-house counsel emails that make their lives easier. At the end of the day, in-house counsel need concise, practical information they can digest quickly and use to advise their internal business clients. Brief matter status information at the top of an email is helpful (couple of sentences maximum).

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Think holistically - outside counsel is a consultant to the client's business

- Treat the client relationship as a partnership with the business. Don't focus solely on the particular litigation matter but think holistically about the client's interests and business goals broadly. Raise issues relevant to the client even if unrelated to the current matter, such as potential implications to future business plans, or potential future legal risk.

Connecting with in-house counsel, business development

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- Clients have a baseline expectation that their outside counsel will possess strong skills and abilities. To set yourself apart from other outside counsel, bring the client creative solutions.

- In-house counsel appreciate when outside counsel share their legal knowledge (articles you have written, invitation to panels you are speaking on) when it is tailored to their particular practice areas and interests.

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