

Supporting GCs at Large Organizations: Strategies for California Law Firms



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Being recognized for your achievements at work is a wonderful feeling. For a moment, you're on top of the world. You had the bright idea, delivered the big win, rescued the proverbial cat from the tree, and suddenly, all those long hours and late nights feel worth it. But you know what's even better than that? Helping someone else have their shining moment — especially when that person is the general counsel (GC) of a large organization.

The relationship between in-house and outside counsel has always been mutually beneficial, but it's unbeatable when it's grounded in trust and collaboration. As the role of GC evolves to meet a multiverse of new and increasingly complex challenges, building and nurturing that long-term relationship is more important than ever.

Today's GCs are expected to do more than provide legal advice; they are strategic partners, integral to business operations and their organization's overall success. As the needs of businesses shift, law firms that understand and account for the evolution of the GC role will cultivate the strongest partnerships.



Here are six strategies for California law firms to deliver additional value for GCs at large organizations.

1 Offer strategic counsel

GCs are adept at balancing legal and business responsibilities, but with many competing priorities, it's easy to get caught up in immediate or short-term issues. Outside counsel can help GCs see beyond their day-to-day challenges to frame key discussions and provide a neutral perspective on the company's larger strategic objectives.

Outside counsel can provide support by:

- **Viewing each legal issue through a business lens.**
Position your firm as a partner in the decision-making processes, not just a legal advisor. With every issue you navigate, take the time to understand how it applies to the company's business objectives and tailor your strategies to support and enhance those goals. Remember, while it's important to flag potential flaws and risks, lead with curiosity to allow your GC client space to explore ideas, offering support rather than rigid limitations
- **Share insights from diverse industries.**
As outside counsel, you will likely be exposed to industries the GC may not have encountered. Draw on that experience to offer new perspectives and suggest innovative solutions that have been successful in other sectors
- **Anticipate future challenges and opportunities.**
Go beyond addressing immediate legal issues by identifying potential risks and opportunities that could impact the company down the road. Use your expertise to forecast industry trends, regulatory changes and market shifts, helping the GC prepare and strategize accordingly. This forward-thinking approach not only mitigates risk but also positions the company to capitalize on emerging opportunities

CEB's [DailyNews](#) section provides updates with takeaways and practical insights for attorneys across more than 30 practice areas. The attorney-written articles range from deep dives into hot-button California legal issues to roundups of new laws, regulatory changes and litigation outcomes. All DailyNews stories link to CEB resources for additional information, case law and interpretations authored by leading legal authorities.





2 Scope out regulatory and compliance risks

GCs must keep up with an ever-changing landscape of case law and regulations to ensure their company remains compliant. In California – the most heavily regulated state with the biggest court system in the country – that’s quite an ask.

Outside counsel can lighten the load by:

- Monitoring and analyzing relevant developments, offering timely updates and interpretations to help GCs be proactive rather than reactive
- Conducting risk assessments of the company’s practices and policies to identify potential compliance issues and suggesting adjustments or enhancements
- Developing compliance programs that help GCs design or refine their operations to align with the latest legal requirements
- Providing training sessions and resources for the GC to share with their colleagues when explaining new regulations and compliance obligations



Detailed, practice-specific explainers can be found in [CEB’s Practice Guides](#) and [Secondary Sources](#), which provide instructions and analysis for handling business, employment, family, personal injury, real estate and legal matters. For an even deeper dive, look to CEB’s [county guidance](#).

3 Stay ahead of cyber threats

GCs are increasingly responsible for overseeing data privacy and cybersecurity measures, which demand constant vigilance and proactive strategies to stay ahead of ever-emerging risks. This is especially critical in the Golden State, home to numerous tech companies and stringent regulations, such as the California Consumer Privacy Act.

Outside counsel can help GCs navigate these pitfalls by:

- Conducting thorough risk assessments to identify potential vulnerabilities in the company's cybersecurity framework and recommend measures to mitigate risks. This could include reviewing contracts and agreements with third-party vendors to ensure they meet cybersecurity standards and protect the organization from potential liabilities
- Helping GCs draft and refine data privacy and cybersecurity policies, ensuring they comply with the latest legal requirements and industry best practices
- Providing training for employees and other key stakeholders on emerging cyber threats and legal obligations, fostering a culture of cybersecurity awareness within the organization
- Assisting GCs in developing and updating an incident response plan, ensuring the organization is prepared to act swiftly in the event of a cyberattack or data breach



CEB's tools include a [how-to guide](#) and [checklist](#) for developing an information security plan and [strategic considerations](#) for obtaining cyber insurance. It's also a good idea to scan [DailyNews](#) regularly for timely updates.



4 Anticipate crises

GCs must make quick, high-stakes decisions during emergencies. The pressure to protect the organization's reputation and minimize legal exposure can be intense and require coordination with multiple internal and external stakeholders.

Outside counsel can help by:

- Developing a comprehensive crisis response plan for situations such as cybersecurity breaches, regulatory investigations and reputational threats so that, if the worst happens, the GC is prepared to act decisively
- Ensuring that the company's actions and recordkeeping during a crisis comply with relevant regulations and industry standards, reducing the risk of regulatory penalties and supporting their future legal defense
- Preparing a communication plan for liaising with external and internal stakeholders during a crisis, ensuring consistent and legally appropriate communication

5 Mind the budget

With increasing pressure on GCs to manage costs, law firms need to be mindful of their billing practices, factoring efficiency and budget constraints into every solution they offer.

Outside counsel can achieve this by:

- Offering alternative billing arrangements such as fixed fees, contingency fees or hybrid arrangements that align with the GC's budget and cost management goals
- Providing clear, upfront estimates and detailed invoices to avoid unexpected expenses and help GCs manage their budgets
- Investing in technology that streamlines processes and automates routine tasks, leaving more time and resources for higher-level, strategic work
- Providing training and resources to help in-house legal teams handle certain routine tasks, reserving external counsel for more complex matters
- Conducting regular cost reviews and adjusting scope and timelines as needed to ensure costs remain within the agreed-upon budget

6 Strengthen collaborative ties

GCs often serve as the primary legal advisor to the board of directors and C-suite, which requires them to manage important relationships and communicate complex legal issues in a way that's understandable and actionable for nonlegal professionals.

Outside counsel can facilitate connections and enhance communication between GCs, board members and other stakeholders by:

- Translating complex legal concepts into plain language, ensuring that board members and other nonlegal professionals grasp key issues and make informed decisions. This could include organizing workshops and briefings for the board and other stakeholders to keep them informed about relevant legal developments and their implications
- Serving as a mediator or negotiator for GCs navigating and balancing the expectations of various stakeholders across different company departments to help them reach a solution that meets company-wide needs
- Managing interactions with regulators on the GC's behalf, helping build and maintain strong, cooperative relationships and ensuring any concerns are addressed promptly and effectively



CEB's [webinars](#), [MCLE programs](#) and other [training materials](#) are also effective for staying ahead of emerging issues and best practices.

Help GCs add value to their company

Scoring your own goals is impressive, but being the mastermind behind a perfectly orchestrated pass that leads to a touchdown? Legendary. Success in an in-house role depends on leading through influence and collaboration, so by supporting GCs in achieving their objectives and empowering them to shine, outside counsel can become their lowkey hero. This approach helps cultivate a robust, long-term relationship that will be indispensable as the GC role expands and evolves.

By understanding the unique challenges GCs face in California and proactively guiding them in navigating their biggest challenges without worrying about getting the credit, outside counsel can provide the ultimate assistance – helping GCs add value to their own companies. Mastering this client service skill is crucial to sustaining long-term engagements.

Find out how CEB can help you strengthen your relationships with in-house counsel by scheduling a demo.



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