



## What to Expect in Corporate Counsel Jobs

By Stony Olsen

**Okay, you want to get that nice corporate counsel position. But what, exactly, will you do once you're hired? In other words, what should you expect the company to be looking for?**



There are several quintessential corporate attorney fields to work in. If you want to be considered for a position, you have to expect to know about these things.

Litigation, of course, is what most companies dread — but many have to do it. So if you

have good litigation skills, try to find a company that has a lot of courtroom work. Most bigger corporations will have some of it all the time.

Intellectual property — this goes hand in hand with litigation, in many cases. Sometimes you will have to defend the company's intellectual property or attack someone else's property. But most corporations will have at least some copyright and trademark issues, and then there are the companies that are always patenting things, especially technology companies.

Contracts are also a big part of the corporate legal world, of course. Negotiation, approval, vetting the contracts — all of this is part of the corporate legal officer's job. Remember, however, that the point of the company is to make money, so the typical "this contract sucks royally" attitude, where you can find all sorts of reasons not to go through with a deal, is not really welcome.

Management of outside counsel is also important at the bigger firms. It's an interesting jump to trying to tell the law firms they are billing too much and to cut costs. But managing outside counsel is a critical part of any legal

department, and one that is growing in importance. Expect to have to run a team of attorneys sometimes.



There are other practices, as well, that are more specialized. These include employment law, environmental issues, and so forth. Surprisingly, however, it is not likely to include tax issues. Those belong to accounting for the most part, and, for the most part, you can leave it to the accountants. Or the outside firms, of course.

Other things are compliance issues — making sure that the company is complying with appropriate regulations and so forth. Corporate secretary and corporate governance issues also arise occasionally — just what about those stock options? Ethics is a big area, too.

Government affairs (who has to put up with the SEC or IRS? Legal, that's who), environmental affairs, employee stock issues, claims, risk management and so forth all come up in smaller companies. In fact, in the smaller companies, the legal department can pick up all sorts of things, as law has an octopus tendency to move into many areas.

So, if you are thinking of going into corporate work, expect to have to do any, some, or all of the above. And emphasize how great you are in these areas in the interview!

Good Luck!

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