You are thinking about the possibility of going in-house? Consider the following before moving forward!

1. Start by talking with in-house lawyers to learn more about their role. Reach out to alumni from your school that are currently working in, or have worked in, an in-house capacity. Ask about what their day-to-day life is like. While talking with these lawyers, simultaneously consider whether working in an in-house milieu is of real interest to you. Can you envision yourself enjoying such a role?

2. Through your conversations and informational interviews with in-house attorneys, try to come to some conclusions before engaging in the job hunt. You do not want to invest the time it would take to find an in-house position only then to determine that the in-house role is not for you.

3. Formulate questions as you would for any informational interview but be specific to working in-house:
   a. “What is the preferred or usual background for attorneys at the company?”
   b. “How is the legal department organized?”
   c. “Are there systems or programs for attorneys’ professional development?”

If your initial inquiries lead you to believe an in-house career is still a good fit for you, following are some suggestions to help you prepare for and accomplish such a transition.

A. Take a look at some of the many duties and responsibilities carried out by lawyers working in-house:

   Role includes:
   - Proactively managing and preventing risk
   - Being knowledgeable about various subject matters and areas of law (this is especially important for a General Counsel or Associate Counsel position)
   - Knowing how to make the business ‘work’
   - Ensuring self as well as others’ adherence to ethical, legal and financial guidelines
   - Managing with integrity
   - Protecting the company’s interest and reputation
   - Managing Outside Counsel

B. Research and review the skills corporations are looking for when hiring in-house lawyers

   Skills include:
   - Corporate Generalist Background.
   - Communication Skills. Communicating as a business professional and not merely answering questions through legal memoranda
   - Issue spotting
   - Practicing good judgment
   - Ability to think broadly and anticipate trends that are developing
   - Being willing to accept risk as steps may need to be taken to move a business forward
   - Striving to find a way to ‘make it work’ and being solution-oriented
   - Financial literacy
   - Ability to get along with all types of people and to work in a consensual environment
   - Emotional intelligence
C. Look at the pros and cons of an in-house position

Pros:

- Level of career satisfaction is very high among in-house lawyers
- Pressure of billable hours or recording of time in 6 minute increments is gone
- Tasks of document drafting and other related matters are more likely to be delegated to others
- Maintain more control over day-to-day schedule with less frequent weekend or vacation interruptions
- Excellent path for someone hoping to move into the business-side of industry
- Compensation packages may be lucrative and include attractive stock options, retirement, pension or other perks

Cons:

- More constituents to manage including internal employees, a board of directors, institutional investors, and outside forces such as media
- Will likely involve a pay cut
- Less opportunity to do cutting-edge legal work
- Prestige issue as In-House Lawyers are part of the ‘cost structure’ as opposed to the ‘income generating’ structure
- May cause difficulty in returning to the law firm life later
- Staffing and budgetary constraints may translate into fewer support personnel for day to day tasks

D. How to find an in-house position

- Start with finding out which corporations are located in your geographic target area
- Network! Generally people want to help if they can, so do not be shy about contacting others for advice, suggestions, ideas, information, and introductions. You should contact alumni that are working In-House as well as any other former colleagues that have moved In-House.
- Become familiar with the Directory of Corporate Counsel including both the Geographic Index and Law School Index
- Utilize the Chamber of Commerce Directories, local business journals, boards of trade and other organizations’ membership rosters
- Locate job openings including reviewing websites such as the Association of Corporate Counsel (www.ACC.com), Indeed, Monster, and Career Builder
- Avail yourself of other sources of in-house job leads including the Wall Street Journal, Legal Times and bar association newsletters
- Contact companies directly with a targeted, personalized cover letter (addressing the specific contact person or General Counsel by name) and review their websites for employment information in order to get your foot in the door
- Reach out to Executive Search firms. Keep in mind that only a small number of these positions will be filled by search consultants or by legal headhunters, so it is best not to rely heavily on this method
- Jump at any and every opportunity. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
- Know that finding an in-house job, especially in our current economy, is likely to take a while. Be committed to the job search, practicing patience and persistence in order to find that perfect in-house opportunity.

Additionally, be aware that like all employers today, corporations are a bit uneasy about making permanent hires and may prefer taking on an in-house lawyer as a consultant or contract lawyer. While there is no guarantee that such a position will turn into a permanent one, it happens regularly, and it may be worth the gamble. Having a foot in the door is always advantageous, especially in a down market when competition is tough.

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