

The Reluctant Attorney: A Path of Faith and Obedience

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- I. **Introduction**
- II. **“Sweeps Weeks”** (Media awareness)
 - a. Human dignity and respect
 - b. The virtual story versus the real story
 - c. Waivers and consents
- III. **“Bartering at the Piggly Wiggly”** (Negotiation skills)
 - a. Bartering- exchanging goods and services for other goods and services
 - b. Consideration for what?
- IV. **“A funny thing happened on the way to law school...”** (Education)
 - a. From GRE to LSAT
 - b. How God used Elle Woods
- V. **“Your professor committed himself”** (Mental health)
 - a. Mental health issues are real
 - b. Tax law reform
- VI. **“How to deal with hangry people”** (Calm temperament/Conflict resolution)
 - a. Hungry People + Angry People= Hangry People
 - b. De-escalation tactics
- VII. **“If it’s not documented, it didn’t happen”** (Employment Law)
 - a. Prove it and yourself
 - b. He said/she said
- VIII. **“What is the Development department?”** (Business Acumen/Finance)
 - a. Is now a good time to tell you I’m an English major?
 - b. Not excelling at Excel
- IX. **“We need you to be Cat Woman”** (Problem Solving/Delegating)
 - a. Other job duties as assigned
 - b. Critical thinking versus common sense

- X. **“You’ll never work in this town again”** (Integrity/Contract Law)
 - a. Read the fine print
 - b. The difference between a “0” and a “1”

- XI. **“A Woman without a Country”** (Immigration)
 - a. Mrs. Hurst goes to Washington
 - b. And so it begins

- XII. **“Your Honor, can I have a minute?”** (Legal Advocacy/Family and Juvenile Law)
 - a. Due diligence
 - b. Humility and the practice of law

- XIII. **“I’m going to need to take Curious George”** (Leadership/Management)
 - a. Because I said so
 - b. 7 Habits of reasonably effective people

- XIV. **“I was just looking for an easy job”** (Crisis Management)
 - a. From cappuccino to crisis management
 - b. Kill me if I become a corporate attorney

- XV. **“License to Practice”** (Legal Know How/Independence)
 - a. When did Civil Pro get added to the bar exam?
 - b. Does this signed napkin count as a contract?

- XVI. **“So you want to be a writer”** (Communication skills)
 - a. We just need 1000 pages...in three days
 - b. I don’t even use complete sentences

- XVII. **“We’re looking for our first in-house General Counsel”** (Independence/decision-making/corporate governance)
 - a. The start-up mentality
 - b. Letting go

- XVIII. **In good company**
 - a. **Moses:**
 - i. Reluctant but obedient
 - ii. Ill-equipped but heavily resourced
 - iii. Competent but burnt out

b. Jonah

- i. Reluctant with runaway behaviors
- ii. Obedient and ornery
- iii. Effective but dissatisfied

c. Esther

- i. Reluctant but resolute
- ii. Terrified but courageous
- iii. Angry but calm

d. Gideon

- i. Reluctant and faithful
- ii. Trusting by verifying
- iii. Competent but prudent

XIX. General Counsel Competencies

- a. **Business acumen:** What does it mean to understand the business? The most effective General Counsels understand that the legal aspects of any decision, transaction or undertaking must be viewed from the perspective of the business goals. In the non-profit sector, the strategic goals are tied to how well we live out our mission and values.
- b. **Advocacy aptitude and experience:** Advocacy requires presence and oratory skills, negotiating skills, a good understanding of laws, regulations, and enforcement practices, as well as understanding of how regulatory agencies function.
- c. **Appropriate temperament:** This requires understanding the audience and the appropriate demeanor needed to accomplish the objective.
- d. **Communication skills:** This also requires understanding your audience and learning the spoke and unspoken language. Effective counsel knows when not to communicate like an attorney.
- e. **Corporate governance understanding:** General counsels need to understand an organization's overarching strategy to promote sustainability while considering the best interest of key stakeholders, including employees, clients, external funders, partners, and community. Effective counsel knows how to manage those relationships and interests well.

- f. **Crisis management ability:** General Counsel cannot perform the job without possessing an ability to reduce and avoid various potential crises. A general counsel needs to be able to lead and collaborate to help contain, resolve, and address the many issues that may arise in a crisis.
- g. **Decision-making skills:** General counsel face many challenges in decision-making, including ethical dilemmas, conflicting priorities, and competing demands for time and expertise. Making wise decisions involves not only complying with the law but aligning those decisions with the organizations; goals and objectives. Sound decision-making requires accurate and timely information.
- h. **Foresight and identification of trends:** This involves the ability to follow political, social, and economic developments to anticipate developments that could have an operational or fiscal impact on your business. The proactive counsel takes preparatory steps with this assessment.
- i. **Independence:** While General Counsel has a fair amount of autonomy. Especially in terms of management style, counsel is very much tied to the schedules and agendas of the C-suite executives and operational priorities.
- j. **Integrity and good ethics:** General Counsel often must manage a balancing act of protecting the legal integrity of the organization while not being considered as a hindrance to business objectives. While GCs are not solely responsible for ensuring ethics and integrity for the entire organization, they play a significant role in developing and maintaining an ethical compliance culture and driving high integrity behaviors.
- k. **Judgment:** The ability to make the right decisions and connect the dots with limited information. Good judgment comes with regular practice and combines critical thinking with common sense.
- l. **Leadership competency:** It is often said that General Counsel is more than just an attorney and provides more than legal expertise. The GC is often seen and expected to serve as an advisor to the CEO and other senior executives and can influence organizational activities when functioning as an effective leader.
- m. **Legal know-how:** It's important to clarify what legal know-how and skills are required for various in-house roles. Required skills change as organizations, products and services evolve—in-house counsel must be versatile.

- n. **Management skills** (coordinate internal and external resources, delegate and supervise): Management skills required include the ability to involve and coordinate internal and external resources, as well as delegate and supervise.
- o. **Media awareness:** Social and digital media, increased transparency and new distribution channels for information combine to make media awareness an important competence for today's general counsel.
- p. **Negotiation skills:** These skills are needed in transactions with vendors and third parties, resolving disputes with clients and customers, or settling legal disputes. A GC that deeply understands its organization's goals and objectives is in a better position to protect the organization's interest at the negotiation table. This skill is learned over time.
- q. **Problem-solving ability:** It may be a given that general Counsel needs to be able to identify potential issues and find creative solutions that benefit all parties to the extent possible. This requires knowing people, understanding context, and anticipating the needs and concerns of key parties. Adept problem solving requires high levels of adaptability to pivot to creative solutions as needed.
- r. **Time management skills:** In the midst of discussing strategic initiatives, mitigating risks, putting out fires, reconciling departments and leaders annoyed with each other, responding to discovery requests, and making sure that everyone is in compliance with various regulations, General Counsel need to excel at prioritizing tasks and learn to definitively say, "yes," and "no" as appropriate. GCs don't need to ask for more hours in a day. They need to know which questions, projects and correspondence uniquely require their attention.