

Things to Consider When Hiring a GC

When hiring a new GC—whether a new one or the first for your organization—look at the hiring process as a series of tests designed to help you identify the right legal leader.



THE Math Test

No matter who you hire, there are specific requirements they will need to possess—the numbers must add up to a successful match on paper first. As you develop a position description, consider the must haves and the nice to haves that will make for the most successful general counsel.

- What are the current legal needs of the organization?**
What experience is required?
What skill sets are necessary and which ones are nice to haves?
 - > Specific industry experience?
 - > Specific practice area experience?
 - > Public company or startup experience?
 - > Crisis management experience?
 - > Experience in a highly regulated industry?
 - > Strategic leadership?
- What are the organization's future business objectives that will require legal support?**
 - > Acquisition focused?
 - > International expansion?
- What are the organization's expectations for the GC role?**
 - > Planning for an IPO?
 - > New business development?
 - > Regulatory compliance framework?
 - > Part of executive leadership?
 - > Responsible for compliance as well?
 - > Oversight/responsible for compliance function?
 - > Corporate secretary?
 - > Preparing for IPO?
 - > Significant engagement with business teams?
 - > Responsible for future strategic growth of the legal team?
- How do you expect the GC to add value to the organization?**
 - > Strategic leadership?
 - > Thought leader?
 - > Solution provider?
 - > Consigliere to C-suite?
- What growth expectations are envisioned for the legal team? Will this person be expected to significantly grow the team?**
 - > Do they have prior experience in training, mentoring and developing legal talent?
- Are you willing to relocate the right candidate?**
- Is your compensation structure competitive in the current market?**

THE Chemistry Test

Once you have identified the candidates who score the most points on your math test, you will need to test them on their chemistry—with the culture of the organization, legal team and executive committee. Gravitas matters!

- Leadership Style**
 - > Collaborative?
 - > Consensus builder?
 - > Diplomat?
 - > Driver?
- Personality Fit**
 - > With the C-suite/senior leadership team?
 - > With legal team?
 - > With internal clients—business and operations?
- Communication Style**
 - > Open and direct engagement?
 - > In-person, virtual or email communication?
 - > Is there always a fire drill?
- What type of environment do they work best in (e.g., open floor plan, open doors, open discussions/ lively interactions)?**
- How do they go about problem solving?**
- How would they describe themselves as a manager?**
- How do they approach training, mentorship and development?**

Your primary goal when hiring a new general counsel should be to add expertise, dimension and perspective to the C-suite.

The new GC needs to be able to establish credibility quickly and be viewed as a valued business partner, bringing deep knowledge and unique points of view to the organization. Your hiring process should be thoughtful and strategic, and by testing along the way, you will be primed to identify the best legal leader for your organization. ⚙️

