5 Ways to Prosper During Remote Work

Career Development

> *“No person is an island, entire of itself; every person is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.”*
>
> -*John Donne*

For many in-house counsel, working remotely from home and foregoing time at the corporate office has become the new norm. At least for now, and perhaps permanently for some, gone are the days of casual office chats where thoughts and ideas could easily be bounced off of colleagues for immediate feedback.

If at times it feels as though you are working on an “island,” you are not alone.

Whether you transitioned to remote work during the pandemic or provide legal support to multinational corporations at remote divisional or subsidiary office locations, you can take steps to remain connected with the corporate “mothership” and colleagues.

Consider the following five practices to help you create a bridge with your corporate clients and colleagues — all while gaining efficiencies for your legal practice.

Increase your visibility

Maintaining a consistent virtual presence with your corporate clients and law department colleagues helps with client and colleague engagement during virtual team meetings, virtual law department meetings, and one-on-one calls with clients, direct reports, or your supervisor. Making the effort to contribute during virtual meetings and calls also eliminates the “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” perception.

Offer to present on a topic, participate in corporate initiatives, (e.g., diversity and inclusion, mentor-mentee programs, pro-bono services), and volunteer to assist your commercial clients with any business issues or research. Simply put, as your workload permits, continue to serve as a valued source of information, solutions, and support.

Eventually, you'll be viewed as a reliable and trusted subject matter expert for a particular area of legal practice (e.g., digital/information technology, federal vaccine mandate regulation, contest/sweepstakes rules, certification programs, COVID-19 force majeure, etc.).

Create resources

Create "playbooks" and "checklists" for commonly used or referenced documents (e.g., supply agreements, digital click-to-accept platforms, new team member onboarding, M&A due diligence, real estate purchase due diligence, etc.,). Build your reputation as a resource for providing time-saving tools.

This goes for producing internal training videos and/or podcasts to educate and inform commercial clients on such areas as the contracting process, legal services, the do's and don'ts of non-disclosure/confidentiality agreements, protecting intellectual property, and code of conduct, to name a few.

Establish and maintain an electronic legal documents/forms library. Include commonly used templates and clauses so that they are easily accessible. Eliminate "re-inventing the wheel." Your library will support your self-sufficiency and develop greater efficiencies. Request copies of relevant presentations and add to your library. Presentations often provide a treasure-trove of information.

Invest in your relationships

A transparent, open, and trusting relationship with your supervisor is paramount to being an effective, valued, and efficient advisor. Schedule monthly one-on-one update calls with your supervisor. Your supervisor is an excellent resource for information and insight into corporate developments. A strong rapport with your supervisor will allow you to be proactive in counseling your commercial clients, as well as arm you with information to anticipate potential challenges and assist with your ability to "look around corners."

Develop and nurture your relationships with subject matter experts (i.e., IP, labor/employment, tax, risk/insurance, compliance, etc.,). Keeping in regular touch with these subject matter experts will create a working relationship that will produce efficiencies for the request-to-turnaround process.

Always maintain strong, trusting relationships with your compliance team. Have your compliance team contacts on speed dial when critical issues arise to protect your company's reputation.

Take notes from the general counsel

Take particular note and listen intently whenever you receive communication from your general counsel. Your general counsel will often have a unique perspective and vision given the corporate circles he or she manages and navigates. Often, your general counsel will have insight into the concerns and expectations of corporate leadership.

Accurate information is a very powerful tool. Share pertinent and factual information with applicable stakeholders to advance the business objective. Take appropriate measures to help avoid surprises.

Ask for help

Be willing to ask for help. As the seventeen century English author John Donne observed, no person is an island and entirely self-sufficient. It’s ok not to have all the answers. Clients will benefit from the collective knowledge and experience of your network.

If available, and with your supervisor’s approval, utilize the support of your law department paralegals and administrative assistants. These support professionals are tremendously valuable resources.

We hope the suggestions and practices above will assist you in keeping tethered to your corporate mothership, commercial clients, and law department colleagues.

Thomas M. Yih

Associate General Counsel

Ecolab Inc.

Thomas M. Yih is associate general counsel at Ecolab Inc.

[Charlie Chen](#)

Corporate Counsel

Ecolab Inc.

Charlie Chen is corporate counsel at Ecolab Inc.