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2012 Top 10 30-Something: Kelli Cubeta

Interviews and Profiles





General Counsel

Billing Services Group

Age: 33

Proudest Achievement: “From a personal perspective, I am most proud of my family. I absolutely adore my husband, and we have two precious little girls. Professionally — and this has nothing to do with my award, I promise — the fact that I was chosen by ACC’s South Central Texas board and its members to serve as president meant a lot to me, because our members are just an amazing group of people.”

Getting involved

Kelli Cubeta joined Billing Services Group straight from law school as associate general counsel in 2003. Within two years, she reduced outside legal spend by 45 percent. When asked how she did it, Cubeta answers with one word: involvement. “Going straight into an in-house position from law school was beneficial because I didn’t have a preconceived notion that outside counsel should do anything,” she says. “I had earned my attorney’s license and I was going to use it.” Cubeta says she was also lucky to have a mentor in her general counsel, Robert Isham, who put no limitations on her. “Rob gave me a tremendous amount of confidence and self-worth, and his support was critical at that point in my career.” Cubeta went on to fill his shoes, and now she is the company’s sole attorney.

In reducing expenses, the most significant cost cut came from bringing more litigation work in-house. Cubeta drafts briefs, and even represents Billing Services Group in mediations and various disputes. “I am effective in handling litigation because I know the nuances to the industry and BSG itself, whereas outside counsel has to learn the details and decipher the appropriate direction,” says Cubeta. “Being immersed and close to the business and the employees is an incredible advantage for in-house attorneys.” Billing Services Group’s primary business is IT-related, so on big cases, Cubeta serves as the liaison between outside counsel and the IT group. She coordinates discussions and normalizes industry lingo, making sure pertinent information is being clearly communicated and highlighted, rather than “outside counsel spending time and expense deciphering complicated IT issues.”

Other cost cuts came from transactional work. Billing Services Group has contracts with many major

telecommunications companies, and Cubeta brought drafting and negotiating contracts in-house. Small-scale acquisitions were also brought in-house. Cubeta says she keeps a keen eye on the bills, paying specific attention to the hours charged for various tasks. Still, she knows she can't do it all, and she considers how her time is best used. As a result, Cubeta has negotiated highly favorable flat rates with firms for certain tasks such as legal.

In addition to reducing spend, Cubeta has been extensively involved in risk management. Billing Services Group has hundreds of clients, and BSG is responsible for monitoring its clients' performance and adherence to industry requirements based on feedback through consumer inquiries. Consumer complaints come in through three different BSG divisions, and until Cubeta became involved in the process, there was no resource that documented all complaints in one place. With communication between divisions lacking, the group missed opportunities to identify and proactively resolve issues. "As the attorney trying to mitigate risk, it felt like I was playing Whack-a-Mole," says Cubeta. And then, one night, a solution came to her while she was in bed. She scribbled it on a napkin and met with IT the next morning to explain her idea for a comprehensive risk management database. Today, a whole division of the company focuses its work on the database. "It's been evangelized to federal and state regulatory authorities as the way to monitor client performance in our industry," says Cubeta.

Cubeta is actively involved in ACC as the South Central Texas Chapter's immediate past president and chair of the Ethical Life Award, which annually recognizes an in-house legal department and an outside firm or attorney who emulate ethical practice. She says she values ACC because of the camaraderie and friendships she has formed through the organization.

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