



Guide to working In-house



In the past few years companies have been hiring more lawyers into varied and interesting roles within increasingly complex legal structures. From corporate governance and data protection to FSA regulation, compliance is on the agenda for most of our clients.

E-commerce, marketing and developing new businesses through the internet have impacted on many companies as well. In addition to commercial lawyers, corporate clients are recruiting M&A, competition, IP / IT and litigation lawyers in order to address their complex business needs and to advise on specialist areas. In-house, these lawyers are able to advise on matters at the earliest possible stage thereby maximising the benefit to the business.

Current market

Whilst the economy is presenting some challenges, we are still seeing a reasonable flow of new instructions, mostly replacement hires, but also some new positions. Demand remains strong in the energy sector – which has even seen teams expanding – as well as, surprisingly, insurance. Even though many investment banks are not actively recruiting, some will for fantastic candidates with specialist skills.

Why move in-house?

We hear recurring themes when talking about the pros and cons of working as an in-house lawyer. A popular draw is the ability to see where your legal contribution "fits" into the whole commercial context. Often lawyers want to get involved at an earlier stage where they can give optimal advice / actually structure a deal, draft or negotiate a contract so they are not called in to "fix a problem" which they could have prevented.

People are often attracted to the prospect of working with a variety of people from different backgrounds (not just lawyers) and to being able to make a genuine contribution to a business. On the flip side, there is no hiding behind email or secretaries because the client can walk into your office at any time!

Ideal candidate profile

While our clients are looking for technically sound lawyers with a good training behind them, they are equally concerned with a commercial approach and want to ensure that candidates are going to be a good fit culturally for their business. Their commercial teams need solutions and "bottom line" advice not lengthy explanations of what they can or cannot do.

The lawyer needs to be a person who builds relationships easily, whose opinion will be respected and who can push back when appropriate. While it used to be the case that candidates from private practice were best advised to "stay put" until they gained at least three years' ppe, we find that in-house clients are increasingly keen to consider more junior lawyers, with the prime time for a first in house move being around the 18 month PQE level.

Career development

Many candidates ask us: "If I choose to leave the well-defined career path of a law firm, what can I expect from working at a company?". It can vary amongst companies but one option is to progress by taking on additional responsibility, for example, for less experienced members of the team or managing a part of the business and, eventually, to manage the legal team as Head of Legal.

Another route is to become closer to the commercial side of the business and move into a non-legal role. Most companies will support your continuing education and professional development but it is often said that it is really up to the individual to carve out their career in a business.

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Lifestyle

One of the positives of working as a lawyer in a company is that you generally have a good degree of control over your hours. While you will be expected to pull your weight, and there will always be things that crop up unexpectedly, you should be able to maintain a social life, plan holidays and see your family regularly!

As lawyers spawned in the macho "long hours" culture of private practice, it is refreshing to step away to a career where you will be challenged and you will work hard, but where you can plan for busy times and manage your time to allow for a balanced lifestyle. Some companies even promote your well being and offer yoga, gym, or leisure facilities on site.

Pay and Benefits

Examples of the sort of benefits that typically attach to in-house packages include:

- Bonus (10-30% on average)
- Pension (predominantly money purchase schemes rather than final salary)
- Car allowance £5-8,000 on average (in some cases cars are still provided)
- Medical insurance (occasionally for spouse and dependents also)
- Stock options (particularly at the more senior level)
- Share save schemes
- Mobile phone
- Other perks (e.g. product allowances, season ticket loans, health club membership, etc.)

Conclusion

Moving in-house can be an exciting career move for lawyers at any stage of their career. Our team of specialist consultants have been servicing companies for over ten years and are well placed to offer practical advice on a confidential basis and or to assist you in your search.

We have relationships with FTSE listed corporates as well as start-ups and smaller established companies and will pass on our knowledge of the client to give interested candidates a better flavour of what each company may offer.

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