

A New Sheriff in Town

BY MIKE EVERS

Congratulations! You have just accepted the challenge of taking over as the new general counsel of XYZ Company. It won't take long for you to size up the technical capabilities of your new staff. Good writing, sound legal analysis, general intelligence and work ethic all appear—or fail to appear—rather quickly. You can weed out incompetence if you find it.

However, any housecleaning is secondary to your most important task as the new leader: to identify the most talented and useful members of your team. By “useful” I mean lawyers with an esoteric specialty or industry expertise. Also pay attention to lawyers who try to prove themselves to you early on. A little brown nosing is simply a way, sometimes awkwardly, for your new employees to express commitment to working on your team.

Keeping the useful members of your department is just the beginning. Enriching their work experience is the long-term challenge. It's not a sign of weakness to seek the opinions of—and delegate quickly to—those lawyers with obvious value to the organization. Recognize their accomplishments early and, if possible, promote someone whom you identify as a rising star.

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