

## The Westlaw Column

### An Inside Look From Inside Counsel At Thomson Reuters, Legal

The legal needs of corporations are as varied as the industries they serve. What do inside counsel work on at a business whose business is the law? Ed Friedland is General Counsel for Thomson Reuters, Legal, and one of more than a thousand attorneys working at the business. In the following interview, he provides his perspective on his daily duties and key trends for corporate counsel.

#### Editor: How do you approach your relationship with outside counsel?

**Ed Friedland:** Because of what we provide to the marketplace, our business relationship with our law firms is unique. It's always a two-sided relationship, where the law firm is at the same time counselor and customer.

Choosing outside counsel often involves a judgment call. Litigation is always going to require outside counsel, but beyond that are a breadth of issues that are unique to corporate counsel. For each, inhouse practitioners need to decide if it's a matter where casual knowledge is adequate to address it or is it something that requires a specialist. I'm not going to go rearrange the electrical circuitry in my house if I'm not a licensed electrician. Invariably there are times when we're looking at something because of the exposure, or because of the novelty or the complexity, where we say this is not something we can handle ourselves. So there is not a formula but rather a gut feeling on where we really need help. Without a doubt, finding the right lawyer or the right group of attorneys for a particular project is a critical decision for us.

#### Editor: In what area or issue in your work have you seen the most growth?

**Ed Friedland:** Compliance. Some years ago, we were reasonably comfortable operating with the assumption that no news was good news. If we didn't hear from a particular business or function we could assume that everything was working okay. They knew when to raise their hand and call for help. I don't think anyone can really afford to operate with that mindset anymore. We need to be more proactive in reaching out to all parts of our business, domestically and globally, to have a comfort level that there's appropriate attention to compliance, whether you're in a regulated industry or not. We now have a corporate unit tasked with rolling out a consistent set of values and messages, both domestic and internationally. We have several initiatives, from online training to compliance-related evaluations of our businesses.

Another topic that's top of mind is privacy and data security – another concern that not too many years ago didn't even exist as a practice area. If you go back ten years you would be hard-pressed to find practitioners who promoted themselves as data privacy specialists. It's an area of increased attention, regulation and concern, and since we're in the information business it's something we need to address both as an employer and as a content provider.

#### Editor: How do you evaluate outside counsel for their productivity and efficiency?

**Ed Friedland:** We all live under unreasonable deadlines and have to respond to them. We're in an age where the *real-time practice of law* is a necessity. As an issue comes up, the expectation is that within a 24- to 48-hour cycle we'll have some feedback from our outside counsel. We need a basic understanding of where we may be going, based on their legal research and analysis. In that respect, outside counsel need to be fast. If I call a firm about an issue and they tell me it's going to be a week before they can advise us how we should manage it, often I'd have to tell them to not even bother.

It's very much about distilling the breadth of information available to attorneys during their research process, analyzing it and making a recommendation that I can discuss with my management team. I need to provide the right level of awareness to our business colleagues about concerns and exposures that we flag. Nobody wants to read a 10-page brief from me or anyone else on the intricacies of an issue. So it boils down to quick and effective legal research and then crisp communication as to what we're dealing with today – and what might be around the corner. *You can get more information about Thomson Reuters, Legal on the Legal Current blog at [www.legalcurent.com](http://www.legalcurent.com).*

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