
A Continuing Conversation with Leaders from the Legal Industry



Paul Liebenson, *Regional General Counsel*

ArcelorMittal

Paul Liebenson is Regional General Counsel, North America, of ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steel company, where he's involved in complex negotiations, litigation management, dispute resolution, international business, compliance and corporate responsibility, among a myriad of other issues.

Q: *What about your job and/or day-to-day activities do you think outside counsel should know that would better enable them to serve your needs?*

A: When I was interviewing to be Assistant General Counsel at Tellabs, the then CEO, Dick Notebaert, gave me some advice: "There are no such things as legal issues, only business issues." That insight has informed my role as in-house counsel. Our business people look to us to help them solve business problems, using our legal expertise. We need to communicate with them in terms they understand: risk, value, likelihood of success, and cost. And the quicker the better.

Q: *How do you define outside counsel's role? How involved are you in managing outside counsel's activities?*

A: I see outside counsel's purpose as surgical, leveraging their special expertise and resources to support in-house counsel in managing the legal affairs of a business. My level of involvement with outside counsel depends on the significance of the matter and what phase it is in. I am, of course, more involved on our most significant issues. I tend to be more involved at the outset, clarifying the business significance and

objectives and defining the strategy and budget. I am similarly involved at key milestones. I otherwise do not micro-manage and trust my outside counsel to deliver on what we have agreed and to alert me of any major problems or developments.

Q: What are your expectations for outside counsel who represent your company?

A: Beyond the specifics of the matter they have been retained for, I expect outside counsel to learn about our business, our industry, our management structure and our culture. Like any relationship, it's about getting to know one another and building trust. To more properly manage my expectations, I expect outside counsel to communicate regularly, honestly and transparently.

Q: What types of training opportunities, if any, would you like to see outside counsel provide to you?

A: Ethics-related training is always appreciated because of CLE requirements.

New/hot areas of law, such as FCPA, conflict minerals, data privacy, and internet security.

Process-oriented topics, including crisis management, advising senior management and boards of directors, internal investigations, and implementing effective alternative fee arrangements.

Q: Can you offer an example of how outside counsel has provided you with exceptional service?

A: Responsiveness is key. The most impressive examples have been my outside counsel who are traveling, in meetings or otherwise out of their office yet still manage to get back to me quickly, at least to acknowledge they received my message and how they plan to deal with it. Beyond that, I most value outside counsel who are strategic, practical and insightful and have a laser focus on attaining an optimal



business result. There is one litigator in particular I have reached out to for twenty years, whenever the stakes are highest and the odds most stacked against us.

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