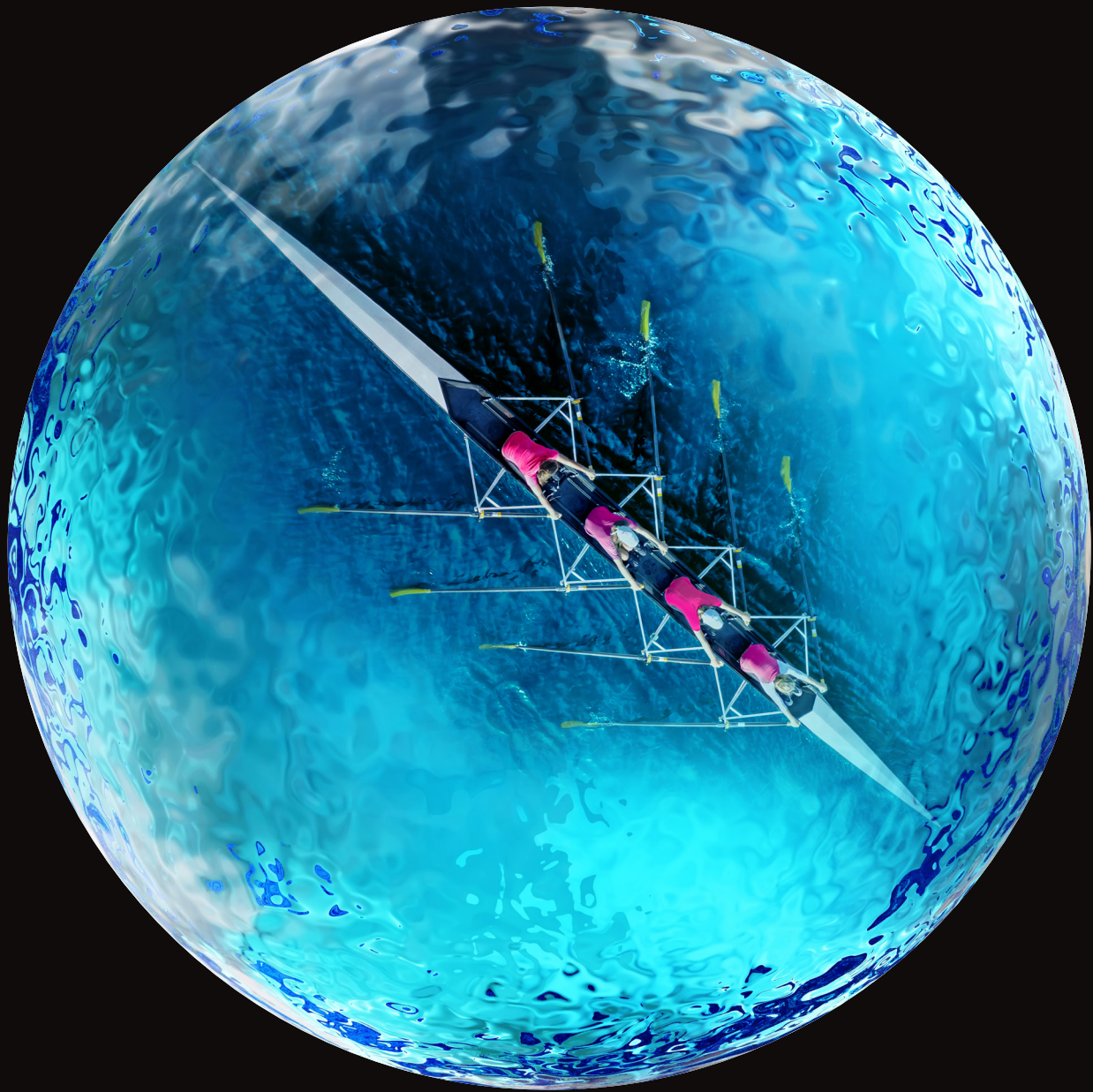




People-Focused Leadership

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For chief legal officers (CLOs), differentiating themselves among well-qualified leaders, especially in a crowded market, can be a challenge. Continued pressure on legal departments to do more with less, and forecasts of growing in-house legal department headcounts only amplifies the need for exceptional leadership skills for those in top positions. Deloitte's research on the CLO role finds that one of the key ways to demonstrate strong leadership is by developing strong talent. General Counsels and CLOs repeatedly cite talent and succession planning as critical to the success of their department and to their ability to be valued business partners, noting that they spend "a lot of time" thinking about these issues. An immediate focus on your team to confirm that you have strong support for your strategic plan should be a priority of any new chief legal officer.

To better define the skill set required to be effective in this effort, Deloitte's Chief Legal Officer Program spoke with Cornell Boggs, senior advisor at BarkerGilmore and former general counsel of Toys "R" Us and Dow Corning. Cornell has more than a decade of experience in top leadership roles in the legal function, and currently is responsible for conducting high-level executive searches for CLO positions and roles that report directly to the CLO. He also provides executive coaching to general counsel and chief compliance officer candidates.

We asked Boggs to share his thoughts on the differentiating value of people-focused leadership, and he summed them up in three simple words: cultivate, captivate, and counsel. Boggs describes people-focused leadership as the ability to cultivate talent across a wide spectrum of skills, captivate the dedicated efforts of your team, and inspire trust among your team, peers, and leadership so that you may provide counsel — aptly put for CLOs wanting to excel in leadership.

Cultivate: to acquire or develop; to prepare.

True leaders know how to identify and cultivate talent. Doing so requires the leader to be both flexible and self-aware. Not all talent will demonstrate promise in the way you do, or in the way most expected within a particular organization. Good leaders identify a diverse set of skills that are indicative of future leadership potential and support their team members and potential successors in honing those skills and identifying areas for improvements. The best leaders invest their own time to know and nurture talent and intentionally build teams that include a wide range of complementary skills, so the team on a combined basis is stronger. Effective leaders also design a culture that values a broad range of contributions and leverages the skills of each team member.



Three tips for cultivating talent:

- 1 Get to know your people.** Spend the time and energy to understand what your talent enjoys doing, what their goals are, and how you can personally contribute to their development. Empower them to apply their strengths and take ownership of their outcomes by holding them accountable. For maximum efficiency, encourage your direct reports to do the same on their teams. If your talent believes that you are invested in them as people, not only will they be more engaged and interested in contributing to the shared vision, they will persevere when you ask them to take on tasks outside of their comfort zone. This extra level of support occurs when your team trusts that you believe in them, that you aren't asking them to stretch unreasonably, and that you've thought through the growth experience that a particular opportunity presents.
- 2 Create an environment that values unique contribution.** Think about the structure of your team's collaborations. Are all meetings logistically the same? Does the structure of meetings encourage the contribution of some, but discourage the contribution of others? Do you have creative leaders on your team who might benefit from a meeting that involves physical motion, whiteboarding, and open thought generation? Think about issues of presence disparity and recognize that participants may be in vastly different time zones. Can you leverage technology to improve these dynamics? Can you provide agendas in advance of meetings so all team members have the same information going into the meeting and time to think through the materials and prepare their contributions in advance? Doing so can especially be valuable to introverts on the team, who might want more time to formulate their views and add their voices to the discussion.
- 3 Provide a safe space for failure.** In corporate cultures that stigmatize failure, top talent is likely to be less innovative, less collaborative, and less engaged. In cultures where some degree of failure is not just tolerated, but is supported, individual contributors have more psychological freedom to create, innovate, and progress. Teams can function more effectively because there is no need to blame any one person for a failure. But, don't hesitate when changes need to be made. While innovation requires freedom to fail, a track record of poor performance should be addressed as soon as possible. Although difficult, making necessary changes in staffing, and putting the right people into the right roles on your team can set you all up for success. Not doing so in a timely manner can drain the team's energy, diffuse their focus, and weaken performance.

How the ability to cultivate talent is uncovered in interviews or succession planning:

The ability to cultivate talent can be uncovered by reviewing turnover rates, more specifically exit interviews. But remember, not all turnover is bad. If the CLO's direct reports are leaving the company to lead the helm of their own departments, you can be assured that the CLO has been investing in his or her talent. If the CLO's team is leaving the department to take roles within business units, that is also a positive sign. However, where the team is leaving to take jobs of equal or lesser prestige, you might assume that they don't feel invested in or comfortable in the environment.

"I presume that high-potential talent will be in constant demand and will often receive calls for other opportunities. The key is to keep them engaged in meaningful work. But, even then, some will move on and at that point my goal is to be supportive through the transition."

Cornell Boggs

"Consider including administrative personnel, paralegals, and other team members in staff meetings to ensure that everyone's needs are reflected in meeting agendas, and ensure that representatives from those communities are represented in the quarterly and annual meetings related to department strategy."

Cornell Boggs

Captivate: to attract and hold the interest and attention of.

The most effective leaders have followers who are true not only to the mission of the organization, but also to the personal success of their leader, peers, and direct reports. Captivated teams are restless with positive energy; they are creative and driven. The team itself understands the unique contributions the others on the team are capable of, and interested in making, and they leverage that as often as possible. Captivated teams support each other through difficult times, stretch to accommodate the needs of other team members, and feel assured that their role on the team is valued.

Three tips for captivating talent:

- 1 **Allow yourself to be vulnerable.** Admit to your mistakes, your shortcomings, and your need for others' help. Explain your leadership style and ask for your team's support on areas where you'd like to improve. Have an open door policy and hear your team's concerns when they express them. Allowing yourself to be vulnerable may be one of the more difficult skills to develop, especially for CLOs that have built a career on being able to confidently give legal advice, but combined with self-awareness and transparency, vulnerability forms the foundation for trust.

"We all have strengths, but no one is highly skilled at everything. Effective GCs rely upon their teams and will build their skills in practice areas that support the important and essential strategic goals of the company. You must be willing to not only learn from the lawyers who know more than you, but also to find ways to include them in business updates and communications with the board. Really celebrate the fact that they are helping you be a better leader."

Cornell Boggs

- 2 **Be self-aware.** A captivating leader must be self-aware enough to flex to the needs of his or her team on a regular basis and not expect the team to flex to his or her own needs. To be a captivating leader, you should explain to your team what your preferred mode of communication is, how you plan to build a culture that values each team member, and most importantly,

how you may respond to crisis or stress. It is unrealistic to expect even the best leader to never succumb to stress, but letting your team members know in advance how you might react to stressful moments can help them support you during those times.

- 3 **Be transparent.** Give your team important information as soon as you can. Don't hide the ball and don't withhold critical feedback. Understand how those on your team best receive feedback and then be direct with those who appreciate it, and nurturing to those who need it. If you've created a culture of trust, providing critical feedback becomes much easier for you and your team.

How the ability to captivate your team is uncovered in interviews or succession planning:

You will know if your team members are captivated by the way they interact with you and others. If they bring great ideas and high energy to the work, if they motivate and support each other, if your turnover is low, and your own 360-degree reviews are high, it is likely that you have a captivated team. When others are evaluating your leadership potential, your reputation in this area is likely to precede you. A captivated team wants to tell everyone who will listen how great you are, so this leadership competency is likely to come out during reference checks or the upward review process.

"The skills required to captivate talent are especially important when you are new in a role, and where there are people on your team who have been with the department longer than you. Transition is difficult for everyone, but bringing your team together using these skills allows you to develop a strong team faster."

Cornell Boggs

Counsel: to advise.

Your team looks to you to lead, but often your practice group or subject matter experts know more than you do on a technical issue. Allow them to be the experts, but help them to navigate the “politics” of the environment, a situation, or client. While your team members may not need you to teach them the subject matter content, they could likely use your help in understanding and skillfully navigating the unwritten rules of leadership. Like any good teacher, explain the “black letter law” and then teach them how to navigate in the gray zone. Advise them on your experiences and insights, and help them come to their own conclusions.

Three tips for counseling talent:

- 1 **Model the behavior you want to see.** Critical among key leadership competencies is presence. When there is discord, drama, or crisis in the department or company, others will look to you to be levelheaded, calm, and composed. Model these traits for others, and let them know you can be counted on to lead even through the hardest challenges. When people trust you, they are more open to your counsel.

“Recognize that you are ‘on’ at all times and that your comments, behaviors, body language, and attitude are very evident to the organization and your team, so even if you are personally frustrated and would rather be doing something different, or be somewhere else, you must recognize that as a leader you have to maintain a reliable leadership presence. This is essential to your long-term success.”

Cornell Boggs

- 2 **Encourage 360-degree reviews.** Feedback from clients, peers, direct reports, and supervisors is vital to development. Be sure that key business partners have a voice in the 360-review process. Their opinion on your team’s level of engagement with the business is critically important. Encouraging your team to seek out this feedback, sort through actionable themes, and act on the information provided is essential to their well-rounded

development. But, creating an environment where seeking out critical feedback and openly working on improvement is the key to making 360 reviews effective. As referenced earlier, being candid about your own flaws can help your team members recognize their own and have the moral courage it takes to work on change.

“Find ways to make sure your team members are engaged in the ebb and flow of the actual business. The best feedback that the lawyer can receive is that he/she is a business partner who just happens to be a lawyer.”

Cornell Boggs

- 3 **Be intentional about creating development plans.** Allow your direct reports to participate in the creation of the plan and check in with them often in one-on-one meetings. With permission, share the plan with others who may be able to help implement the plan, and provide or create opportunities to demonstrate critical skills. Consider external development opportunities. Several organizations have leadership development training programs that can be leveraged to demonstrate to your direct reports that you’re invested in their development and that you support the growth of their networks. But, sending them to external programs isn’t enough; it is essential that you understand the training presented in these programs and that you provide opportunities within the department for the individual to practice and demonstrate newly acquired skills.

“The regularly scheduled feedback cycle is critically important. This is especially important for diverse attorneys because they often don’t have an organic mechanism for informal feedback, and can be isolated in a system with only an annual feedback cycle, which is frustrating.”

Cornell Boggs

How the ability to counsel others is uncovered in interviews or succession planning:

Whether you are viewed as trusted counsel can be determined by how and when other leaders engage with you. If you are pulled into conversations in the early stages, or are asked your opinion well in advance of any legal issues arising, it is likely that you are trusted counsel. The advantage of developing this competency is twofold. It allows you to be involved early in the strategic discussion, which ultimately can benefit your team. If you are trusted, your team is likely to be trusted, and so you lay the groundwork for your team to be involved as partners and counselors to others in the business. By encouraging your team to seek out feedback and grow their own competencies in this area and others, you build the foundation for a legal department or team that can serve as trusted counsel and business partner to other stakeholders.

One final tip, have fun. Making your way to the top legal role can be tough, but a good CLO isn't all work with no play:

"Some of the best times I had were the ones where I was deeply involved in initiatives that were important to the business. While working with Coors Brewing Company and Miller Coors I engaged with the business in water stewardship initiatives. Water is critical to the beer-making process, and these efforts meant a lot to our company and to our customers. It was great; it got me deeply engaged in these efforts on an issue that was core to the business, and, it was just fun."

Cornell Boggs

As the role of the CLO becomes increasingly more important in the C-suite and the responsibilities of the role expand, the need for thoughtful succession planning will grow. As you consider your own leadership style and position yourself to advance, people-focused leadership is a critical skill set you cannot neglect. It will differentiate you among leaders, and support your growth while stimulating the professional growth of those around you, allowing you to build and leverage highly functional, effective, and enthusiastic teams.





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