

# ANNUAL LMA SILICON VALLEY IN-HOUSE COUNSEL PANEL

*JUNE 2025*

## Presenters:

**Rob Chesnut - Former GC/Chief Ethics Officer at Airbnb**

**Nadim Hegazi - Senior Product Counsel at eBay**

**Minh Hoang Merchant - GC at Midi Health**

**Phuong Phillips - CLO at Aledade**

**Traci Stuart - President/CEO at Blattell Communications**

## TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS

One of the most important attributes general counsel (GC) look for in outside counsel is not easy and takes time – trusted relationships. Attorneys must be able to communicate effectively and be business-oriented, while keeping the client top of mind. Suggestions for strengthening relationships with GCs include: visiting their company, meeting their team, and peeking around corners to help them stay one step ahead of possible legal concerns. GCs confirm they “phone a friend” when looking for outside counsel in specialized areas of law because they already trust that person, which saves time.

Trusted allies often receive referrals. As one panelist mentioned, it’s even better when your trusted outside counsel admits they could take the case, but instead recommends another trusted referral who is more specialized on the issue.



## PITCHES & RFPs



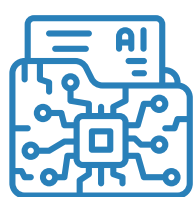
The GCs on the panel are not looking for window dressing at pitches or for lengthy proposals; they want to meet the people who will work on their matter and who truly understand their business – including the company’s mission and values. GCs want and need the best outside counsel team, so it’s a turn-off when law firms bring in individuals for the pitch who are misaligned with the RFP or do not have a role on the team.

## URGENT...UNDERSTAND COMMUNICATION STYLES

These GCs say when they mark an email or text as “Urgent,” it is usually because it’s a pressing matter, not just for the GC, but for their leadership team as well. Where there’s a trusted relationship, there should already be a healthy respect for each other’s time. They recommend doing your best to respond quickly to priority communications, and if unavailable, attorneys should try to identify someone on the team who can assist with the urgent issue. Again, simple communication etiquette goes a long way in furthering trust.



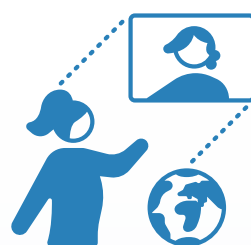
## DO YOU USE AI?



Our GC panelists revealed they are expected to use artificial intelligence (AI), and they expect their law firm counsel to use it too. Of course, businesses often require transparency around how their outside counsel are using AI tools. Toward this end, be prepared for GCs to ask how your firm is using AI to be more efficient and let them know in what ways AI will be used on their matters. The panelists made it clear they are not looking to replace humans, but rather they want teams to be more efficient by leveraging available AI tools. They emphasize they still need and expect a keen human eye to review AI-generated work.

## YES, TO REMOTE WORK

Given a trusted relationship, remote/hybrid work arrangements can be efficient and effective according to the panel. It’s perfectly comfortable to meet via Zoom or other video platforms because many businesses use this format for meetings. While it’s nice to have certain events and meetings in person –especially when planned in advance to optimize the face time, remote connections allow both in-house and outside counsel greater flexibility – both in geographic range and personal planning. One panelist shared that they appreciate the offer of MCLE presentations for their teams, and noted that doing so both in-person and remotely adds flexibility for those who may not be local.



## What do GCs want to be asked?

When queried about the questions GCs wish their outside counsel would ask, they shared simple but mighty responses:

- What’s your goal for the case?
- What can we do better?
- What would set you up for success?
- What’s the best way for our firm to partner with you and your teams needs?



Thank you!