

## What The Big Bang TV Show Teaches Us About Being Great Lawyers

By Richard Russeth

Twitter: @richard\_russeth

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/richardrusseth>

Lawyers tend to be smart; this makes sense. Lawyers tend to want to show off how smart they are; this also makes sense. Lawyers tend to like complicated legal solutions; this makes no sense at all.

I am reminded of a complicated solution to a simple problem in a recent episode of the [The Big Bang Theory](#) (great show BTW) in which our clever gang of geeks is thrilled that they have managed to switch on a common table lamp:

***Howard:** Gentlemen, I am now about to send a signal from this laptop through our local ISP, racing down fiber optic cable at the speed of light to San Francisco, bouncing off a satellite in geosynchronous orbit to Lisbon, Portugal, where the data packets will be handed off to submerged transatlantic cables terminating in Halifax, Nova-Scotia, and transferred across the continent via microwave relays back to our ISP and the X10 receiver attached to this ... (he clicks the mouse and watches as the lamp lights up) ... **lamp.***

At which point they all cheer.

I have met many Howards in my legal career who draft documents, complaints, demand letters (e.g., [a recent famous demand letter from NYT to WSJ](#)), severance agreements, M&A documents in what can only be called Rube Goldberg legalese. This desire for complication also shows up in a preference for clever legal solutions rather than really useful business resolutions.

A preference that doesn't help the client one whit. It tends to breed costs, alienate everyone from the President and CEO on down, and create more problems where there was only one to solve.

**A great general counsel knows that the best *legal solution* is not always the best *business resolution*.**

This whole NYT/WSJ demand letter drama might be a case in point,. No doubt there are facts of which I am not aware, but IMHO there has to be a better business resolution to the issue underlying that NYT/WSJ dispute over the slogan "NOT Just Wall Street. Every street."

My answer would have included a phone call, jujitsu marketing, new ads and a sense of humor.

Thanks for reading.

[Richard Russeth](#)

*[This is Pt. 4 of "Good GC or Great GC: The Seven Characteristics That Make The Difference", a series of seven weekly blog posts discussing what makes a great GC]*