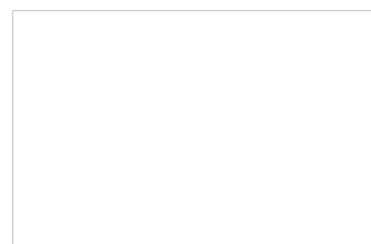


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By Jen Woods

Whether you're job hunting or happily employed, it's always a good idea to talk with legal recruiters, said Rosland McLeod, Vice President, General Counsel, Ethics and Compliance Officer, and Corporate Secretary for Novation, Inc.



McLeod has had ongoing relationships with recruiters throughout her entire career. "I've actually had really good experiences with recruiters," said McLeod, who landed her job at Novation with a recruiter's help.

Even if you aren't necessarily looking for a job, "it's always worth the time to at least have the conversation," she said. Recruiters can offer a lot of information about the legal job market, including the average salaries for specific practice areas and data regarding employment trends. Such information is essential for employees who want to negotiate raises or promotions, explained McLeod.

"Successful in-house attorneys have to think in terms of the company's

take a different, more innovative approach to help the company," McLeod said. "When you're in-house, you really have to be more creative."

If you're a lawyer at a private law firm who is considering transitioning to a corporate legal department, you should "think about the practice area that you're in and if it's conducive to in-house," said McLeod. "It's important that you don't give up what you enjoy about your current job when you move to corporate legal departments," she added.

McLeod was not searching for a job when a recruiter called about the general counsel opening at Novation. In fact, she was quite content at Triad Hospitals, Inc., where she served as Vice President of Legal Operations. She advised senior management on healthcare regulatory affairs, procurement questions, and business and legal matters, such as hospital joint ventures, acquisitions, syndications, and divestitures. She also served as counsel to the Triad's Ethics and Compliance Committee and the Triad Foundation.

She liked her job at Triad and hoped to become the organization's general counsel. However, after the current general counsel of Triad promoted a woman in her mid-50s instead of McLeod, she realized it was going to be a long time before she would have the opportunity to advance to the post. Therefore, she decided to apply for the general counsel position at Novation.

When Novation offered McLeod the job, deciding whether to take it "wasn't an easy decision," she said. One of the first people McLeod talked to when she received the offer was her mentor, the CEO of Triad. She described him as the type of person "who goes out of his way to help others." With his support, McLeod accepted the position and became General Counsel of Novation in December of 2005.

Novation, based in Irving, TX, is a healthcare contracting services company. It

helps members of VHA, Inc., and the University HealthSystem Consortium (UHC), two national healthcare alliances, manage and reduce supply costs.

Novation develops and manages contracts with more than 500 suppliers. It offers an extensive range of contracting services, including contract development, contract and supplier management, custom contracting, enhanced savings programs, online contract management and analytical tools, order management, and online supplier connectivity.

Novation's general counsel office is fairly small, with just one part-time and three full-time lawyers, one paralegal, and one administrative assistant. The office handles "pretty much everything except corporate security because we're not publicly traded," McLeod said. McLeod, who is considered an expert on legal operations, oversees supplier diversity, new technology, quality, and regulatory affairs at Novation.

The most interesting project she's worked on has been the company's expansion to the United Kingdom. "We are working with DHL to provide healthcare procurement," she said. McLeod said that she has faced more opportunities and challenges as she has gotten more exposure to international health law.

Over the years, McLeod has seen many changes in corporate legal departments. For instance, "more and more general counsel are becoming business owners," McLeod said. Since general counsel are constantly thinking in terms of their companies' business objectives, it is often a natural transition for them to become CEOs. "Even in my own career, I've taken on a lot of business ventures," McLeod said.

In the past, there have been many misconceptions about in-house counsel, McLeod said. Years ago, the common perception was that in-house attorneys joined corporate legal departments because they "couldn't cut the mustard" in big law firms. Most people today, however, do not subscribe to that school of thought, she said.

Also, in-house positions were at one time considered the "holy grail of legal practice" because they seemed to offer better hours and more stability. However, McLeod disagrees with this idea because she is busier now than she has ever been.

McLeod frequently gives talks on the Stark Law, Anti-Kickback Statute, Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA), Health Care Quality Improvement Act (HCQIA), and many other state and federal healthcare regulations. She is also the co-chair, along with Nancy Vasto, of the Healthcare Group Purchasing Industry Initiative, a voluntary association of Group Purchasing Organizations (GPOs), which promotes the best ethical and business conduct practices in the industry.

On the Net

Novation, Inc.

www.novationco.com

Triad Hospitals, Inc.

www.triadhospitals.com

Southern Methodist University

www.smu.edu