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## COLUMNIST

BERNADETTE BAYNIE, *group general counsel, Batelco Group*

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# Proving your worth – Part 2

In a two-part series, Bernadette Baynie shares her thoughts on achieving success during the first 90 days as a general counsel.

### Follow up Key Meetings

It will be very helpful during the first few weeks of your new role to attend as many meetings as possible with key staff, to get to know the culture and terrain of the organisation. Whilst the time that you dedicate to such meetings might be a little overwhelming, you will benefit greatly from the knowledge and insights gained and the relationships you develop.

Understanding the key drivers of the business, its products, services, frameworks, processes, regulatory obligations and company risks will enhance your capability and value to the company. Attending business performance reviews across the divisions and subsidiaries of the organisation will help you acquire such knowledge first hand.

Share meetings with your executive team members and key stakeholders in your first week. Hold such meetings, as a courtesy, in their offices and not your own as this will lend to building your relationship with them.

### Ascertain:

- [i] their vision for their departments;
- [ii] their strategic short and long term KPIs;
- [iii] how your law department can partner more successfully with theirs - to meaningfully support the achievement of their KPIs;
- [iv] the strengths of your department in their eyes; and
- [v] opportunities that may improve its overall performance.

Meet with your external law firms and industry regulators to gauge their important insights and perspectives involving your organisation.

Such information can be woven meaningfully into your departmental work plan initiatives for the weeks and months ahead.

### Reputation, Responsiveness & Decision Making

Your reputation as a GC is your most valuable asset, so make sure that you establish from Day 1 a strong reputation for being considerate, accessible, responsive and reliable. Consistently endeavor to reflect the best of yourself to others, in your style of leadership. Translate this approach across all aspects of your GC role.

### Here are some key tips:

- [i] respond promptly to emails, phone calls and meeting invitations. Express your communications in simple and concise language. Avoid lengthy emails that are full of legal jargon. Re-edit them to make them sharp and succinct and use headings and short bullet points, where appropriate;
- [ii] stay ahead of your CEO, Board and internal clients by thoughtfully taking the time to send them brief progress updates regularly on key matters. This eliminates any surprises and helps you to build a trusting relationship with them. It also gives you their ready “buy in” when you need their urgent decision-making for such matters. Preempt what type of questions they might ask you on the matter and incorporate such information in your reports.
- [iii] when drafting your board and other presentations - consider your audience. Adopt an empathetic style of expression to connect more readily to the reader and enhance your chances of gaining their support when presenting live to them.. You are more likely to deliver a strong and confident presentation, especially to your board, if your messages are simple and concise and kept down to 3-4 key points.
- [iv] the way that you make people feel around you will form a key pillar of your personal brand and success. So endeavour to be genuinely nice to those around you, at all levels of the organisation, in particular your team. This will highlight the best of you and bring out the best in others.
- [v] also make the effort to always “look the part”, as this is how you will be perceived by those around you.

The decisions you make in the first 90 days of your role are highly visible to those around you, especially your CEO and team. The quality of such decisions will be greatly enhanced by adopting a consultative and collaborative approach to your work. Ensure that your proposed key decisions are understood and supported by your CEO. Maintaining an enabling approach to those around you will enable you to succeed. This approach will build your key relationships across the organisation and develop your credibility and success as a GC, especially in your first 90 days on the job! 📧