



# 101 How to Become a Successful In-house Practitioner

**Fabrice G. Blonde**  
*Head of Brussels Legal*  
The Bank of New York

**Susan N. Flook**  
*Group General Counsel*  
The Body Shop International Plc

## Faculty Biographies

### Fabrice Blonde

Fabrice G. Blonde is vice president - legal affairs, in charge of all legal matters for The Bank of New York's Brussels-based operations. Mr. Blonde created and heads the legal division of the Brussels office.

Previously he lived in London where he worked in-house and in the finance and banking sector. Before that he lived in Luxembourg where he worked in the same sector. He started his career in the San Francisco head-office of an international law firm where he practiced corporate and securities law.

He studied law in Belgium, France and the United States.

### Susan N. Flook

Susan N. Flook is currently group general counsel for The Body Shop International plc, located in West Sussex, United Kingdom, with responsibility for all legal matters on a global basis. The Body Shop produces skin and hair care products and accessories, which are sold worldwide mainly through a franchise system.

Ms. Flook was previously the company's group intellectual property counsel. Prior to that she was general counsel - intellectual property for Diageo plc, (formerly Guinness plc) an international company, producing, distributing, and marketing branded consumer products and services throughout the world. Ms. Flook was previously group legal counsel and company secretary for CPC (United Kingdom) Ltd. In this position she covered not only the U.K. legal function but also CPC's European intellectual property work and certain acquisition and transaction work in the U.K., Central and Eastern Europe, South Africa, Denmark, Holland, and Italy. Prior to working for CPC she was division attorney for The Coca-Cola Export Corporation in its Australasian and Central Pacific divisions located first in Sydney and then later in Hong Kong.

Ms. Flook is also a founding director and past president of the ACC's European chapter. This professional organisation exists to promote and support the role of the in-house counsel. Susie won the prestigious ACC Member of the Year Award in 1999 and in 2003 received the Law Society of England and Wales Gazette Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding service to the in-house counsel profession.

Susie gained her arts and law degrees from Sydney University.



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**Susan N. Flook**  
**Fabrice G. Blondé**

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## 101 How to Become a Successful In-House Practitioner

### ● INTRODUCTION

Susie: top legal job

Fabrice: not (yet) top legal job

- Am I a successful in-house lawyer?
- What is a successful in-house lawyer?
- What does successful mean?
- How can I become a successful in-house lawyer?



## 101 How to Become a Successful In-House Practitioner

### ● PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS

#### 1. Successful in my own eyes

- I love my job
- I am happy at what I do
- I am dedicated
- I do my best
- Can I ignore others? Can they better judge me?
- I set goals and achieve them



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### ● PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS

#### 2. Successful in the eyes of others

- Boss, colleagues, clients, peers, community can best assess
- Measured on (fast) promotions, responsibilities, awards, \$
- Subjective and hard to define. Many answers
- Depends on many factors



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### ● PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS

#### 3. Tentative definition of successful

- Own definition
- Be happy, get what I want?
- Reach top legal job, get promoted?
- I am successful *or* I think I am successful
- ▶ Good v. Successful (*those incompetents around*)



## 101 How to Become a Successful In-House Practitioner

### ● PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS

#### A. Good

- Best in-house lawyer may not be general counsel (*and vice versa*)
- Meet clients' expectations, excellent hard & soft skills, protect & add-value to company, manage legal risks, business partner...

#### B. Successful

- Can success be measured? By whom? On what? When?
- Boss, clients; seniority, role, reputation; only when *GC*, earlier...

#### C. Conclusion

► **Good lawyer** (measurable) + **manage career/goals** = **Successful**



## 101 How to Become a Successful In-House Practitioner

### ● CAREER TIPS FOR SUCCESS

#### 1. Introduction

*I'm not a successful lawyer. I'm not at the top, not general counsel of a huge, international, publicly-traded, prestigious company with a hundred lawyers reporting to me and member of the Board of directors.*

- I asked my mother (and my girlfriend)
- I asked my boss



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### ● CAREER TIPS FOR SUCCESS

#### 2. What my boss would say

- How to recognize one
- It depends on what I want (now & later)
- Am I already successful?

#### 3. What do I want?

- I want the top job!



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### ● CAREER TIPS FOR SUCCESS

#### 4. How to get there?

- Beginning of career (hard skills). Later (relationships, soft skills)
- Legal excellence (hard skills, knowledge of law, substantive lawyer)
- Soft skills (communication & interpersonal, negotiator, leadership)
- Added value (cheaper/better than law firm)
- Apply knowledge, skills, experience to corp./common good
- Love work, accept responsibility, take risks, work hard
- Part of management, of objectives, of solution



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### ● CAREER TIPS FOR SUCCESS

4. How to get there? (*some more*)
- Build reputation, credibility, trust
- Add value (business partner, support business, not anti-business)
- Business acumen, knowledge of corp., business, industry
- Listen to clients, know what they really want/need
- Think globally, at the larger picture, be a generalist
- Network, have visibility, take credit, find a mentor, get training, great attitude, be open



## 101 How to Become a Successful In-House Practitioner

### ● EQUATIONS and CONCLUSION

- ▶ Successful in own eyes v. Successful in eyes of others
- ▶ Good v. Successful
- ▶ For you (learn) v. For others (business partner, happy clients)
- ▶ Ultimate goal (*GC*) v. Never ending journey (always improve)

\*The End\*

Thank you for your kind attention  
Fabrice Blondé  
(successful in-house lawyer in the being)



## HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL IN-HOUSE COUNSEL

SUSIE FLOOK  
THE BODY SHOP INTERNATIONAL PLC

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- To be successful you must be **EFFECTIVE**
- To be **EFFECTIVE** there are a number of things you must do/be aware of

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- Know the business
- Make sure the business knows you
- Cultivate relationships with all the Executive Team – not just the one your department reports in to
- Be keenly aware of peoples' perceptions and work on changing them where they are just plain wrong
- Be a good listener

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- Be aware of the difference between perceived importance and true importance
- Set priorities (whilst remembering you never get a second chance to make a first impression)
- Focus/ economise/ shorter non legal documents/ no great academic tomes/ short advice memos in plain English

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- Be decisive and approach all decisions on an “intelligent risk” basis – but always subject to your integrity and independence of judgement. Don’t be bullied or intimidated and don’t change your advice or allow it to be influenced in response to management pressure
- Remember your responsibility as a member of the bar is to the company, the law, the courts etc and not to any individual manager of the company



- Embody the corporate culture
- Deliver impeccable customer service
- Stay professional (including your clothes)
- Your negotiating style should enhance, not undermine the long term customer/ partner/ supplier relationships – seek win/win results that focus on the long term in the best interests of the business
- Be pragmatic
- Be a problem solver – strike the right balance between process and results



- Business people want solutions not lengthy academic discussions
- Give two options (be ready with more) and explain pros and cons of each and recommend one
- Demonstrate knowledge of business and the law/ corporate governance in recommendation



- Stay professional – always clamp down on any suggestion of inappropriate action
- Think outside the box/engage in creative problem solving. Draft practical documents
- Don't say NO – offer alternatives – so “no but” is much better. Sometimes, hopefully very rarely, the ‘N’ word will have to be used



- Give in-house training sessions on topics relevant to the business
- Give continuing updates on legal developments which are directly relevant to your business
- Publicise “wins” for the Legal department as widely and as often as possible – couched as “news” for the business

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- Stay in touch with your in-house colleagues in other companies. Learn from their experiences.
- Understand the corporate budget process and work hard at controlling outside counsel expenses
- How much of what you are doing could be done faster by outside counsel? How much could be done cheaper by an in-house paralegal? Keep checking that you are not time wasting and therefore money wasting

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## SUMMARY

- The more closely you can associate yourself and your role with the Company's core business, the better an in-house counsel you will be
- You need to be seen to be driving the business while protecting the business



## SO FINALLY!

- Be prepared
- Be easily accessible
- Be timely
- Be clear
- Be practical
- Be proactive
- Be polite
- Be professional
- Be independent
- Be smart