

Personal development tool—checklist

Produced in partnership with **Paul Gilbert and Lawrence Smith of LBC Wise Counsel**

The following is a practical and largely cost-free checklist of 25 personal development opportunities for the in-house legal team.

It describes generic ideas which can be developed and adapted in any number of situations. Use the right-hand column to note which members of the in-house team each point is relevant to.

Description	Relevant for which members of your in-house team
1. Write a review report. Consider commissioning reports on specific areas of broad interest that will add value to the team as a whole. For example: 'With regard to our policies and procedures relating to IPR, what are the current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?' or 'With regard to our use of external law firms in (X jurisdiction), what would be a coherent commissioning strategy for legal services?' The key to this as a personal development opportunity is that the report should be intellectually extending, relevant to the work of the in-house team and has potential to add value. Ideally, this builds into really important thought leadership as well.	
2. The presentation of review reports, either to the management team, other members of the in-house team, or indeed to business colleagues.	
3. Work shadowing. Junior lawyers can shadow senior lawyers, and senior lawyers can shadow executive colleagues. The opportunity is to work very closely with someone else for a day or two and to get positive insights into how to be a better team member as a result. As a further development point, the experience can be written up as a report and/or presented to colleagues.	
4. Engagement with law firms. How do law firms assess new IT? Teach management skills? Develop talent? Report value? Assess risk? Recruit trainees? What are the lessons for the in-house legal team?	
5. Presentation skills. Team members should chair internal meetings, and write and deliver internal training events.	
6. Writing skills. Write and submit a 1,000-word article for publication in the legal press.	
7. Influencing skills. Organise a networking event for local in-house lawyers in your city/region; consider as a one-off event, but also assess long-term viability of a small network that can share best practice ideas.	
8. Internal training. The business may have myriad resources online and in person. Assess what is on offer and build into all personal development planning.	
9. Walk the shop floor. Every lawyer should spend some time on the shop floor. Institute a one-day-a-year rule that requires lawyers to set up and participate in their own day on the shop floor (and to report back to colleagues).	
10. Work on the business's corporate social responsibility programme; can the lawyers participate in, for example, mentoring school children, fund raising, pro bono work?	
11. Write a training programme that protects income or increases profitability; how can the in-house legal team leverage know-how to impact the bottom line?	
12. Psychometric tests; consider commissioning individual tests (eg Myers Briggs or Insights).	

Description	Relevant for which members of your in-house team
13. Improving judgement. Identify risk assessment models and write a paper on different approaches to risk assessment and risk management (engage with other in-house teams and/or law firms).	
14. Business language skills. Encourage people to improve their understanding and use of business English. Consider using internal resources and/or mentoring.	
15. Peer review. Every lawyer to share a small number of files with a colleague who will constructively critique file management, timeliness and ease of understanding.	
16. Study of black letter law. Not for its own sake, but for a purpose. What areas need greater resilience and how can new knowledge help the business?	
17. Process improvement. It is not easy to set this as a personal development challenge, so as a first step ask for a report on a particular process that examines its efficiency and effectiveness.	
18. Spend a day in finance. Work through a set of management accounts line by line and improve understanding on how the accounts contribute to strategy and business decisions.	
19. Report on strategic alignment. What are the business's key strategic objectives, what contribution does the in-house legal team make to each of them, and how could that contribution be improved?	
20. Law firm cost versus value. Map how much has been spent in the last two years on each law firm, and how much value can be attributed to their work.	
21. Communication improvement. Undertake a limited and targeted survey of business colleagues to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in different methods of communication. How does the business want the in-house legal team to communicate with it?	
22. What do other in-house legal teams do that your team can learn from? This is linked to point seven, but consider a more detailed engagement such as spending a day with another company's team.	
23. Write up a skills matrix for the in-house legal team. What languages are spoken? What non-law degrees have been studied, what other companies have colleagues worked for? What business units have colleagues worked in?	
24. The £5,000 challenge. Find a genuine saving (not necessarily in legal) that can demonstrably contribute £5,000 to the bottom line. Make a business case for the saving to be made.	
25. Reciprocal mentoring. What mentoring is available internally and externally? What mentoring can the in-house legal team offer internally and externally?	

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