

Leadership SBOT Interview Questions



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1. *What were your responsibilities at Nike and Kimberly-Clark?*

I was responsible for (i) oversight of the legal, government affairs and internal audit functions, (ii) board governance and (iii) corporate strategy

2. *Please describe the organizational structure (e.g., what department were you in, who did you report to, etc.) within Nike and Kimberly-Clark.*

In each job above, I reported to the CEO with a dotted line reporting to the board of directors.

3. *What did you find most challenging in your position?*

Maintaining clear focus on the changing priorities facing the businesses, keeping the teams aligned with those priorities and developing talent to address them.

4. *It is sometimes said that attorneys who make the transition from a firm to an in-house position may struggle when they are required to manage people because law firms do not train lawyers to be good managers. Do you agree with this statement? Do you have any advice for improving management skill development?*

I am in general agreement with the statement, though I believe there are many exceptions, too. I believe a sharper focus on management and leadership earlier is advisable to identify those with the strongest interest and aptitude. I do not believe it is realistic to expect that all lawyers can be or should be managers or leaders, any more than those in any other business function.

5. ***Did you enjoy managing people?***

Yes

6. ***What did you most enjoy about your position?***

I enjoyed developing people, building teams, and aligning them with business priorities.

7. ***What do you wish you had known earlier in your career?***

I wish I had known the importance of collaboration, communication and leadership.

8. ***Is there anything in particular you think a young attorney should consider before moving in-house?***

Yes. What is he/she trying to accomplish?

9. ***Can you describe some non-legal job opportunities within a company like the ones you were involved with that young lawyers might consider or pursue?***

Attorneys can move relatively easily into regulatory and human resource roles. With training and effort, movement to general management, finance and strategy, may be possible.

10. ***Can you compare working in-house to working within a firm?***

The singular difference that I see is that the in-house attorney is closer to the consumer of the advice. This difference requires different skills in areas such as collaboration, risk assessment, communication, leadership and management.

11. ***In general, what can an attorney expect compensation-wise in an entry-level position with an in-house legal department? Is the compensation comparable to the compensation with a large firm?***

In my experience, the better legal departments strive to maintain parity with law firms - whether the trends are up or down. At the top end of the in-house roles, in-house compensation tends to be much higher at better companies.

12. ***Sometimes lawyers within law firms express a desire to go in-house because of the perception of better work-life balance as an in-house attorney. How do you think the two compare?***

I worked as hard, if not harder, in-house as I did in private practice. However, I had better control over my time to allocate between work and rest of life. Given my personal priorities, this difference was critical.

- 13. *What advice would you give young attorneys about seeking out either a position with a company or a governmental agency, either in a legal or non-legal position?***

Know first what you are trying to accomplish, assure yourself the role will support that objective and assure yourself that continuing development and feedback exists to support your growth.