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FLEXIBILITY



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As law students and lawyers, we have been trained to be circumspect—to anticipate risks and protect our clients from them. Some believe this is what our employers’ value most about us if we work in-house, and why clients hire us if we work in law firms. But this misses a key part of our value proposition. Frankly, if we approach our advisory roles with risk mitigation solely in mind, our business partners will come to view us as obstructing the business rather than facilitating it. Instead, our clients, whether internal or external, want us to be creative and flexible problem solvers. I certainly look for this in my outside counsel, and it is an attribute we focus on in our legal department.

Creativity conjures up the notion of imaginative thought—a concept that is easy to grasp. But, flexibility comes in many stripes and can often be misunderstood. What flexibility means to me is an openness and responsiveness to situations as they are—to recognize that things are always changing, nothing is fixed, and ideas and positions need to evolve in order to maximize impact and results. Flexibility is also about humility. As situations change, what is required is someone who can engage in give and take, who can recognize that not all approaches or solutions, even if they worked brilliantly in the past, may prove fitting as new information becomes available. We must be receptive to new ideas and changing direction as a matter of course. This is true not just for the advice we provide to our clients, but for how we work as legal professionals as well.