



*Ten Practical Tips for New  
General Counsel*



# *Begin With the End in Mind*

- ◀ New General Counsel face very short ramp-up periods, potentially reduced resources, and high stakes and expectations.
- ◀ In order to lay the groundwork for personal and departmental success, it is imperative to quickly assess the strengths, weaknesses, and expectations of the department in four major areas: team, clients, resources, and processes.
- ◀ Planning to achieve a desired future state is essential for success.

# 10 Practical Tips

Factor the practical tips below when establishing your plan

- 1 • Establish a 90-Day Plan
- 2 • Get to Know Your Team of Resources, Both Internal and External
- 3 • Get to Know Your Clients
- 4 • Evaluate All Aspects of the Legal Department's Service Delivery Model
- 5 • Develop an Understanding of How Work is Allocated Inside/Outside Department
- 6 • Understand the Legal Department's Operating Model, Processes, and Technologies
- 7 • Assess the Management of Legal Spend
- 8 • Assess the Department's Leadership Capabilities
- 9 • Assess the Measurement and Reporting Capabilities of the Legal Department
- 10 • Clearly Articulate Your Vision for the Legal Department and Your Expectations

# *TIP 1: Establish a 90-Day Plan*

- ◀ A plan for your first 90 days as General Counsel is essential so you may maximize your time and gain the most useful information.
- ◀ Without a plan, you will find yourself in “triage” mode and lose sight of your strategic objectives.
- ◀ What to include in your 90-day plan will depend on your company, your department, and your prior connection with the organization but should include most, if not all, of the following 9 tips.
- ◀ You can do quite a bit of planning before your first day.

# *Understand the Parts to Maximize Success*

All the below parts need to be considered and understood when looking to maximize success.



## *TIP 2: Get to Know Your Team of Resources*

- ◀ Knowing your team contributes to open, two-way communication, greater employee engagement, and higher productivity.
- ◀ Good relationships make the change process easier.
- ◀ Schedule meetings with the entire department, including remote locations and staff, not just direct reports.
- ◀ One-on-one meetings, where possible, allow you to obtain the best insights into the department and to articulate your vision – both with internal and external (outside counsel and key vendors) team members.

## *TIP 3: Get to Know Your Clients*

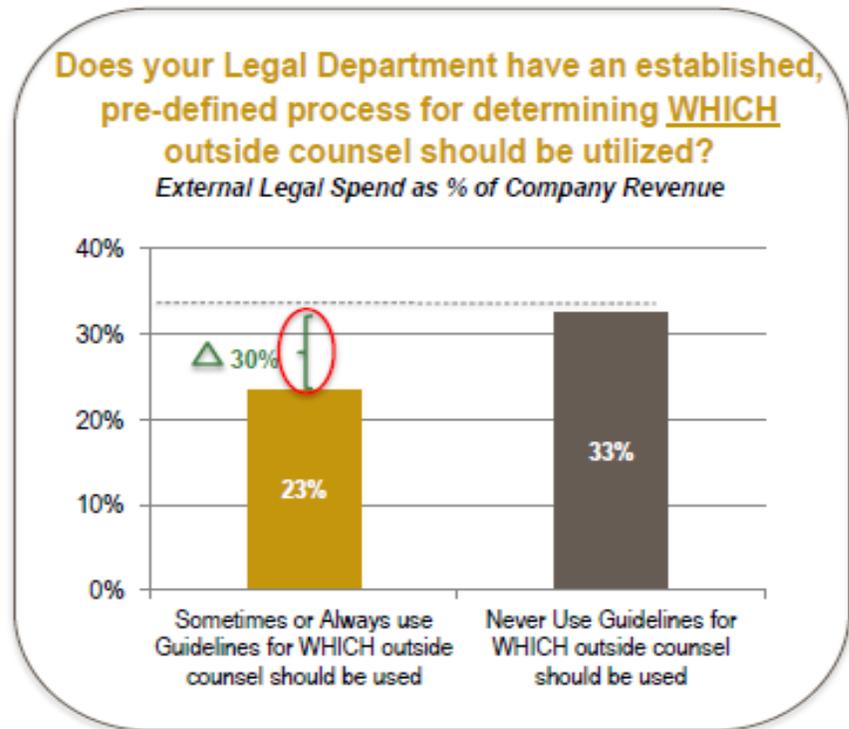
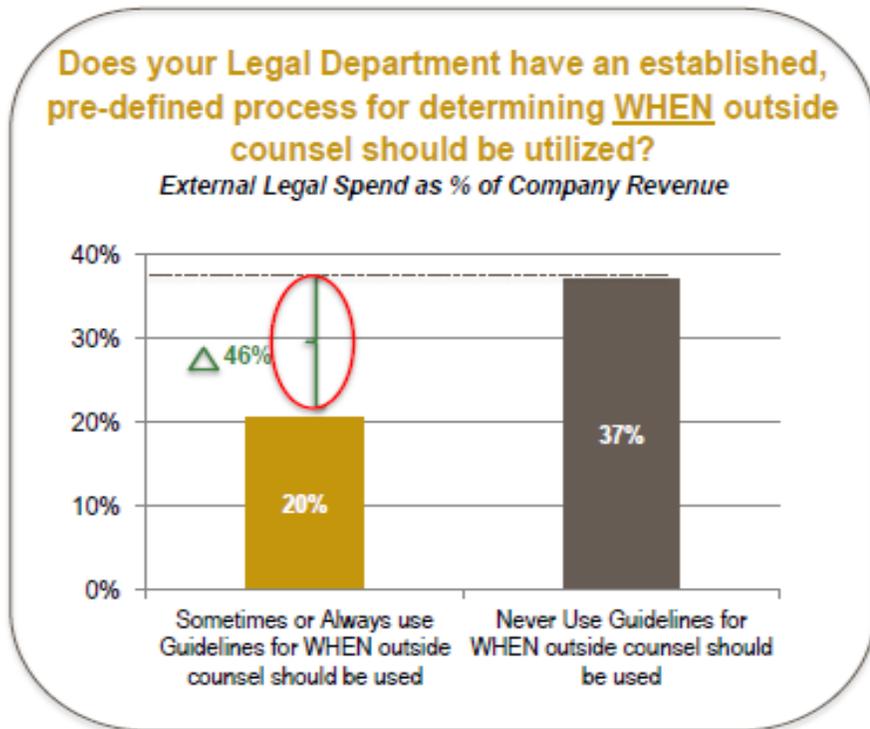
- ◀ Get to know your clients at an organizational and individual level.
- ◀ Organizationally:
  - Understand the company's overall corporate strategy
    - Brand, values, and corporate culture
    - Competitive and business environments
  - Key people and processes
  - Functions of divisions/business units and how they interrelate
  - Expectations for Legal Department and General Counsel
- ◀ Personally:
  - Will establish groundwork for “trusted advisor” relationship

## *TIP 4: Evaluate the Service Delivery Model*

- ◀ Examine the services being provided by your department and make sure they fulfill the clients' needs and are aligned with the corporate strategy.
- ◀ Goal: to provide proactive legal support in the best, most efficient manner to satisfy stakeholders.
- ◀ Evaluate:
  - Internal vs. external work distribution, billing records
  - Clients' perspective of value-add tasks
  - Benchmarks of your department vs. similar legal departments

# TIP 4: Evaluate the Service Delivery Model

Legal Departments that establish pre-defined, situation-based, guidelines for *WHEN* outside counsel should be used, and *WHICH* firms, realize on average, 31% - 46% lower external legal spend.



# *TIP 5: Understand Work Allocation*

- ◀ Who is doing particular work and why?
  - What is the expected role of in-house counsel, and what should it be? Is this the right approach?
  - Is the right work being kept in-house and sent outside?
  - For work sent outside, is it being sent to the right outside counsel or other service providers?
  - Are the right level resources doing the work both internally and externally?
- ◀ Goal: develop a plan to allocate work on a proactive basis to the most appropriate resources based on skills, level, effort, cost, and risk.

# TIP 5: Understand Work Allocation

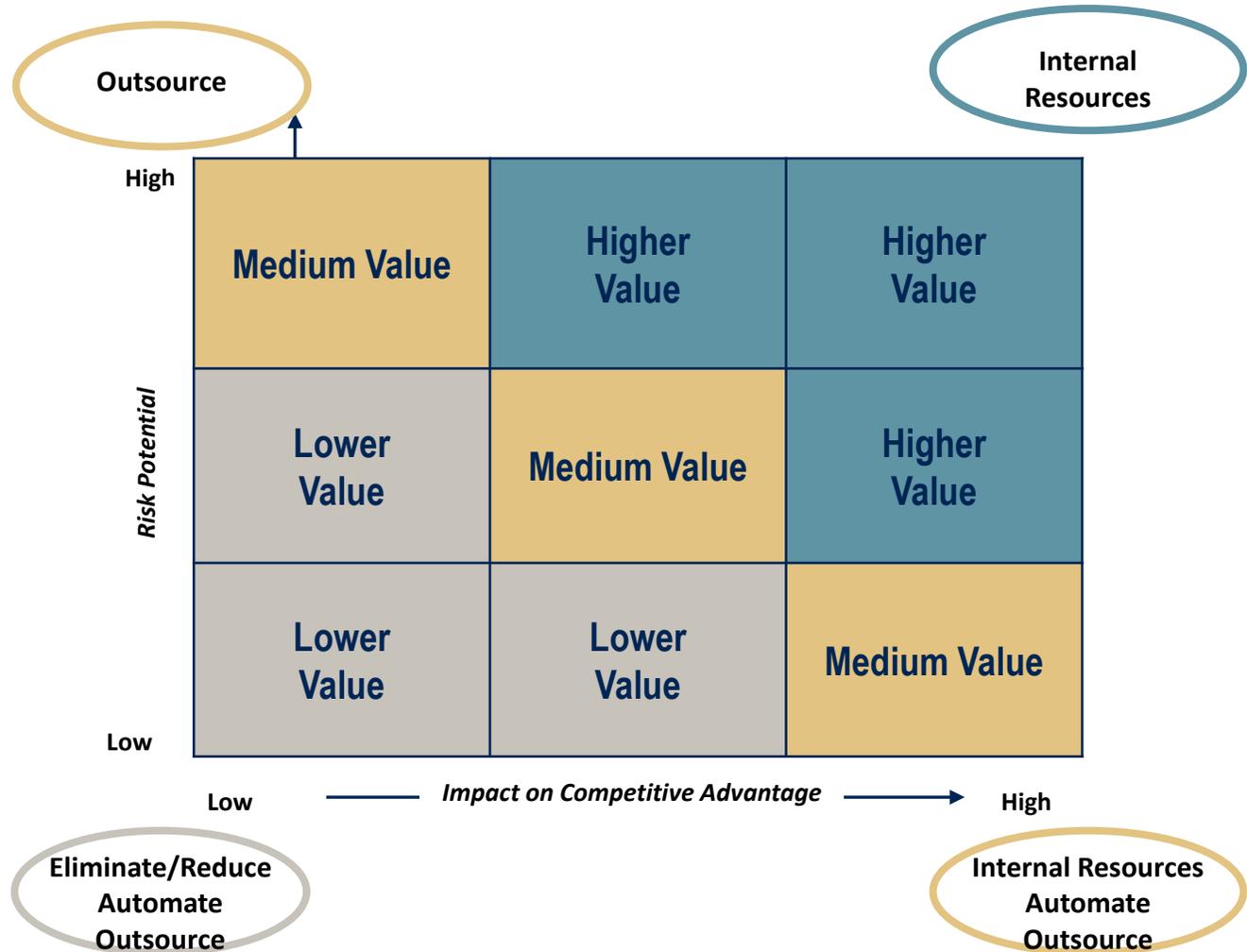
Value is a combination of:

## Risk Potential

The extent to which the type of legal work has the potential to negatively impact the company, e.g. financially, regulatory, goodwill, precedent

## Impact on Competitive Advantage

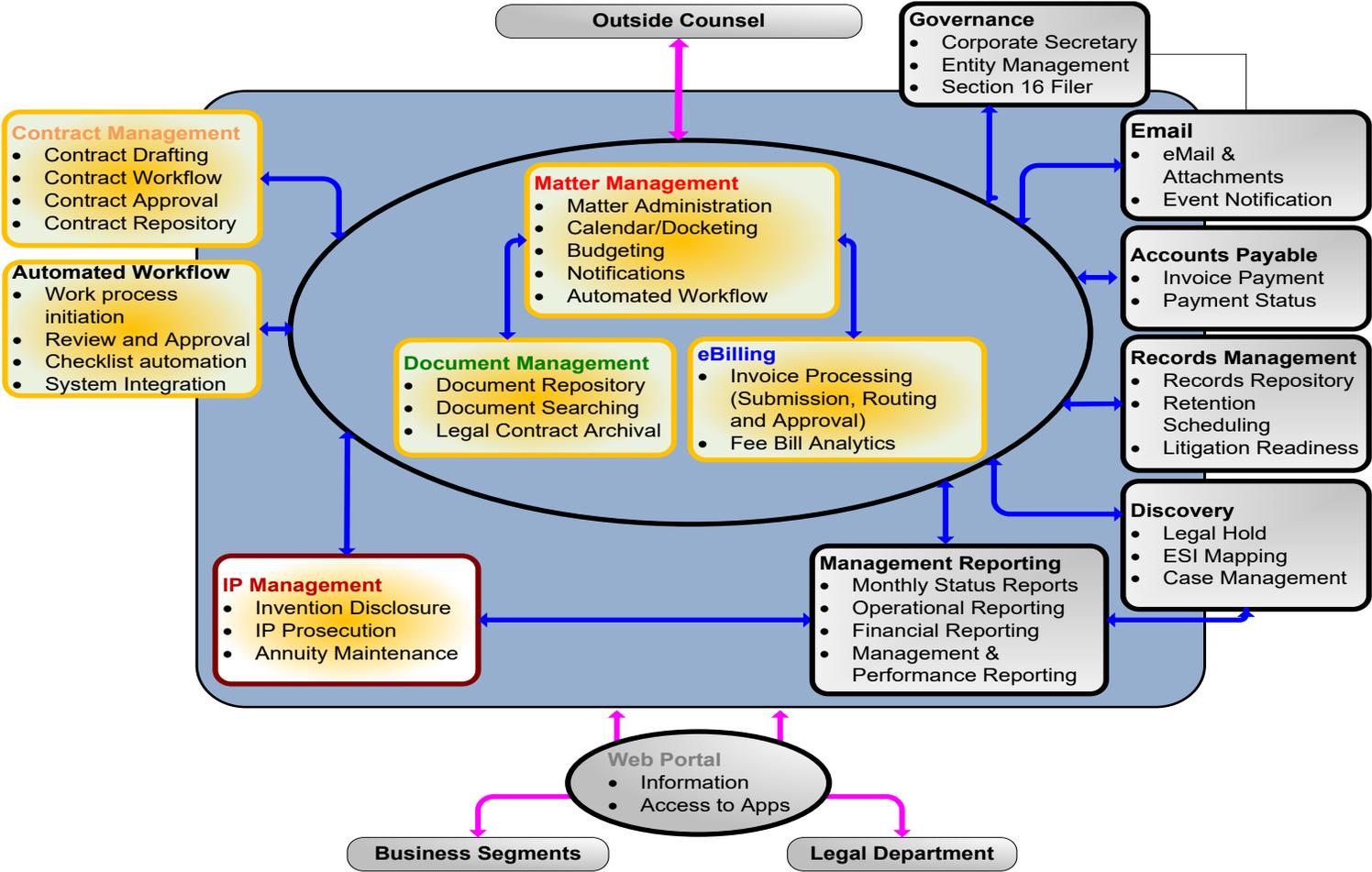
The degree to which the type of legal work drives competitive advantage and supports the corporate strategy



# *TIP 6: Understand the Operating Model*

- ◀ Review process and technology that supports workflow.
  - Standard departmental processes and up-front technology investments can lead to improved efficiency and productivity and contribute to overall budget savings.
- ◀ Common areas of opportunity:
  - E-billing, financial management, send management
  - Discovery management and document review
  - Document and records management
  - Contract and IP management
- ◀ Goal: integrated processes and technology

# TIP 6: Understand the Operating Model



## *TIP 7: Assess Legal Spend*

- ◀ Resist the urge to put the budget at the top of 90-day list.
- ◀ Consider legal spend as part of the overall department assessment with a view to long-term cost management.
  - Are we best utilizing our financial resources internally and externally, based on our internal organization and external allocation of work?
  - Is our cost structure appropriately aligned with the value of our work?
  - How does our spending compare with relevant benchmarks?
- ◀ This holistic approach can generate sustainable savings of 15 to 40 percent.

## *TIP 8: Assess Leadership Capabilities*

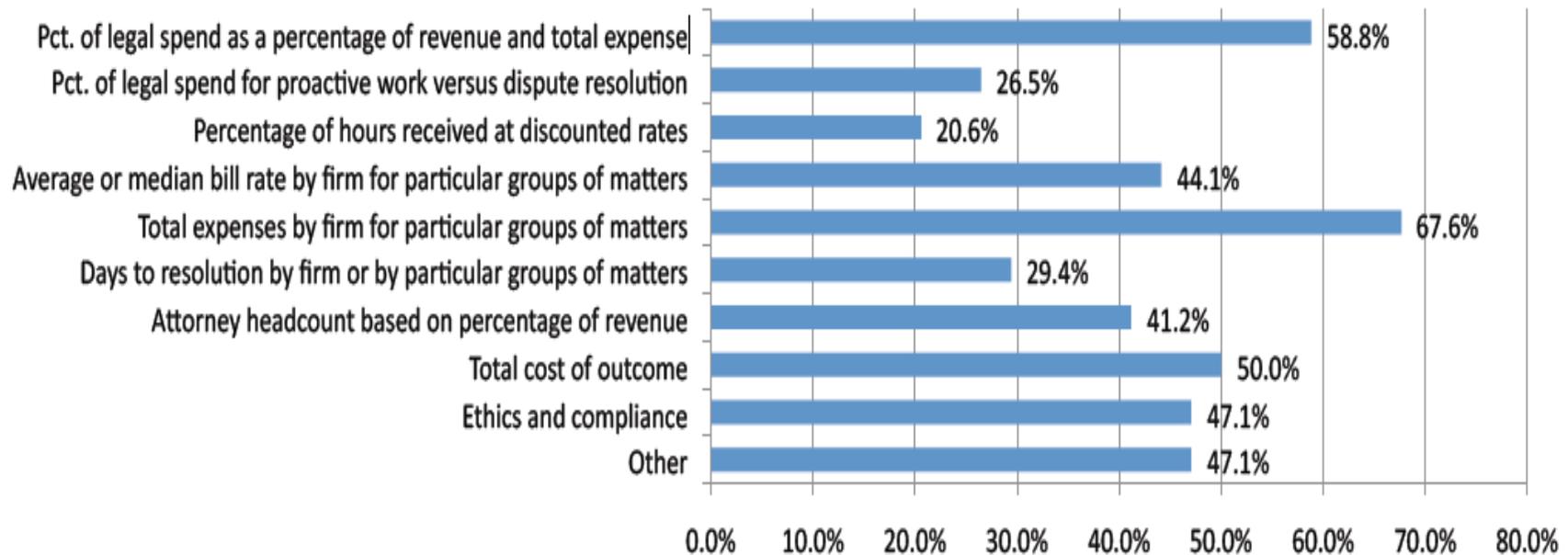
- ◀ Review the composition of your team including the leadership team and future staffing needs.
- ◀ Early assessment of the leadership team allows you to make changes before the structure is too embedded.
- ◀ Implement regular leadership meetings and department meetings.
- ◀ Keep in mind: staff development, employee engagement/satisfaction, team dynamics, and culture.

## *TIP 9: Assess Measurement/Reporting Capabilities*

- ◀ “What gets measured gets managed.”
- ◀ Look at what is currently being measured in the department and what should be measured with a critical eye.
- ◀ Some common areas for measurement include:
  - Budget-to-actual variance reports
  - Average cost by task
  - Average hours per matter by matter type
  - Percent of total outside counsel fees paid to primary firms
  - Average turnaround time for certain contracts
  - Overall client satisfaction ratings

## TIP 9: Assess Measurement/Reporting Capabilities

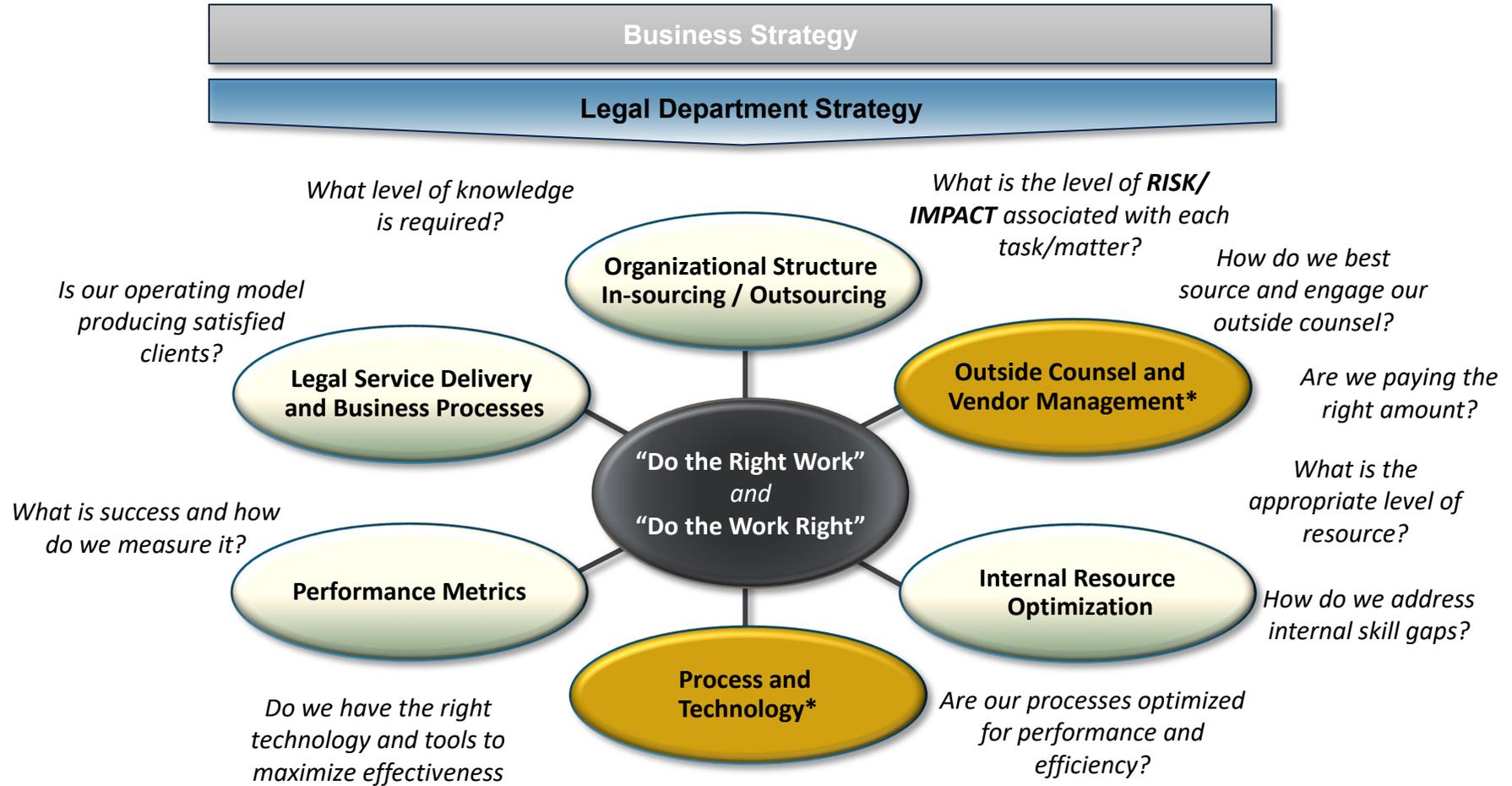
Q34. Which of the following metrics do you track?



## *TIP 10: Clearly Articulate Your Vision & Expectations*

- ◀ Use the information you have learned and analyses you have performed to develop a vision for the legal department: an outline of the department's "future state" and the key steps to achieve it.
- ◀ The vision should come from departmental leadership, but eliciting team input helps ensure buy-in.
- ◀ Make sure team members understand your expectations of them and their role in advancing the vision.

# TIP 10: Clearly Articulate Your Vision & Expectations



# *Three Cornerstones to Success*

✓ LEARN

✓ LISTEN

✓ LEAD