

HEIDRICK & STRUGGLES

The Case for the GC: A Director with Experience as General Counsel Can Help a Board Navigate Activism, Regulation and Risk

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Heidrick & Struggles' LeadershipTV™ explores what boards look for in a GC as a director candidate

CHICAGO, August 6, 2014—In a time of increased shareholder activism, regulation and uncertainty, the role of the general counsel in the corporate boardroom has never been more important. Yet, companies have been slow to recruit general counsels to serve as directors, according to a [new video thought piece](#) from Heidrick & Struggles, a premier provider of senior-level Executive Search, Culture Shaping and Leadership Consulting services globally.

The role of general counsel has evolved to include responsibilities that can make the GC an ideal board candidate, says Victoria Reese, global head of Heidrick & Struggles' Legal, Risk, Compliance & Government Affairs practice. "General counsels have been going to the next level for the past 15 years," she says. The GC has become a company's "first line of defense, proactive in looking over the hill at what's coming."

In the second episode of LeadershipTV™ www.heidrick.com/Knowledge-Center Reese makes the case for senior legal expertise in the Boardroom beyond the presence of a company's own general counsel. LeadershipTV™ is a new visually engaging resource from Heidrick & Struggles to help executives and board members find solutions to complex issues vexing global companies today. Companies can benefit from directors whose competencies extend "beyond risk management," Reese says, including "strategic thinking, and a track record of strategic business partnering" as well. The firm's study of general counsels currently sitting on corporate boards found three common characteristics.

These boardroom directors:

- Have attained a strategic role as a business partner,
- Have experience in directing government relations,
- Have personal experience working with one or more of the sitting board members.

A general counsel is not needed in every board room and not every general counsel is well-suited for a role as a director, Reese says. "However, if you are in a highly regulated industry in a company which has to keep its eye on risk, adding that talent to your board can be a great addition to the team."

About Heidrick & Struggles:

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