

Key Client Planning: Listening to the Voice of the Client

By [Silvia L. Coulter](#) on February 11, 2015

I often ponder the fact that we can't change lawyers' minds about fees and the fact that fees are not the primary criterion on which decisions are based. Yes, they certainly come into play in the decision-making process, as they do in any sales situation in any industry, but they are not and I emphasize not, the key criterion on which counsel are selected.

At a recent firm retreat with a firm in Latin America, a general counsel panel representing 4 significant global companies presented their views about hiring outside counsel. The message, on point with what we often hear, did not change with the jurisdiction.

Here were the salient points made:

To hire counsel we consider the following:

- Do you know our company?
- Do you know our industry?
- Do you have local expertise?
 - Company and Geographic
 - Cut through red tape
 - Contacts
- Price is last on this list

They then stated, "Once we decide on the above then we narrow the selection considering the following:"

- Boots on the ground
- Local references
- We don't wait for things to happen in our supply chain, we have to anticipate these changes, do you?
- These considerations matter above fees even if fees are higher

We can't emphasize it enough, fees are not the driving force in most sales situations. Check in with your firm's lawyers to make sure they can answer the above about their clients. It's a matter of client retention or client loss. Bet on the former.