



Are you ready to be a General Counsel?

A practical general counsel
checklist for your first 100 days

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A practical general counsel checklist for your first 100 days

Becoming a General Counsel is a real step up. You've experienced working under pressure. You've had responsibility before. But now, as the face of legal in your organization, the ultimate responsibility lies with you.

You're not only stepping up to oversee all things legal across your organization, you're also expected to step out into the future to guide your team and organization into brand-new territory.

Your role as a GC involves all parts of the business, as well as areas outside of it, to solve legal issues as they come up and resolve disasters before they happen.

You'll become a GC in an industry experiencing big change.

New tech is disrupting the way law has typically been done, creating huge opportunities for those that can grasp them.

In the wake of the pandemic, employee turnover is high.¹



But there's also change within the GC role itself: it isn't what it was 20, 10 — or even 5 years ago. The changing requirements of legal departments, and the evolution of legal tech, is rapidly transforming the legal world.

You were chosen for a reason. If you're the business' first GC, you'll be expected to set a clear direction. But even if you're not, businesses simply aren't looking for the status quo anymore. Now's your chance to set your legal team in the direction you want.

Your first 100 days is your first impression. If you want to make a good one, you're going to need to understand how technology can help you enhance collaboration, streamline processes and deliver value to your organization and clients. We've put together a practical checklist that'll help you hit the ground running and establish yourself not just as the legal authority in your organization, but also as an authority for positive change. But first...



A modern General Counsel — How is the role changing?

The job description of a GC from just a few years ago will look different to today's. Just look at how many companies have recast the role as a 'Chief Legal Officer', bringing GCs to the C-suite to reflect their enhanced leadership role and expanded responsibilities.

You're no longer expected 'just' to provide technical legal advice; there's an expectation that you

should put your stamp on the role. Businesses aren't looking for simple continuity anymore; they don't want the same old, same old. Today's General Counsel is expected to be proactive in contributing to organizational strategy, providing leadership and nurturing organizational growth.

Gone are the days of the GC and legal department being reactive rather than proactive.



And the expectations don't stop there:

Technological innovation:

Using new legal tech to improve your organization is now a requirement. And it has to be implemented in a way that improves the department and the business, not just understood as a potential option.

Legal knowledge:

Your legal knowledge may well be extensive, but that's not enough. You're going to need to understand all aspects of the organization. This means getting to know the good, the bad, and the ugly, getting involved in all aspects of the business, understanding teams across departments, increasing collaboration and helping solve problems.²

Strategic contributor:

You want to be viewed as (and are expected to be) a vital strategic contributor on all fronts, the glue that holds everything together — not narrowly focused, and certainly not holding things up.

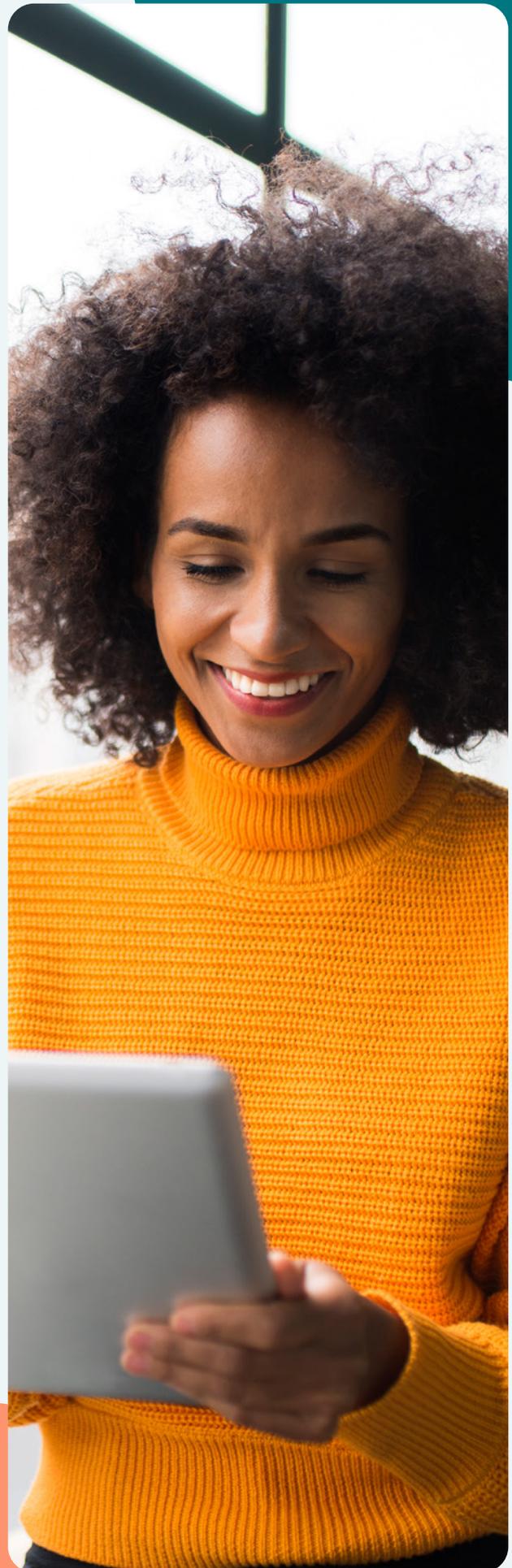


Delivering more with less

You're also under pressure to deliver more with less. Since 2019, law departments have seen consistent budget cuts alongside rises in their workload.³ Internal demands for increased productivity and cost-effectiveness have made it hard not just to get work done, but for GCs to communicate exactly how the legal department is adding value.

New legal tech helps relieve this pressure. Initially, it might seem that new technology will inflate your tech stack, giving you more software to grapple with rather than making things easier. But, with the right platform, the opposite is true: it can combine and optimize your tech stack, bringing together disconnected tech that your legal department is currently using, handing you the opportunity to really make a change — and quick.

So, without further ado, here are practical strategies to help you succeed in your first 100 days as GC...



Build relationships

Forging good relationships and building rapport with new colleagues is crucial to success in any business, particularly when it comes to law.

Legal isn't expected to operate in a silo. And as the face of the legal department, people need to know that face. By building relationships throughout the organization, you help people view your role and advice as an important part of the decision-making process — rather than a necessary evil they have to endure.

There are a few easy things you can start doing right away to help build a strong network of relationships:

- Introduce yourself to everyone you can, from interns to heads of departments — as soon as possible.
- Keep communication channels open with everyone, across all levels of the company.



Set boundaries

You want to help, but you'll need to learn how to set effective boundaries. In fact, doing so is one of the *best* ways you can help. Though it may seem counterproductive to building relationships, setting proper boundaries actually contributes to healthy interpersonal relationships, including at work⁴.

Boundaries give you and your colleagues, and therefore your organization, clear separations of responsibilities and space for growth. You might be the face of legal but

that doesn't mean your shoulders should take on the burden of everyone's problems.

Building relationships is all about communication. You can't always be in the same place at the same time as other people in the business. But fortunately, you can use technology to make it seem a little like you are. New legal tech helps you do this by creating a unified place where you can track matters and properly communicate and collaborate with everyone in your team and those across the business.



Make a strong first impression

The foundation of a strong relationship is a good first impression. But there's enough to worry about without having to constantly think about how you're coming across. So how can you make a strong first impression?

Whether in person or online, proactively introduce yourself to and integrate yourself into the organization.

Arrange meetings: Get to know the C-Suite and the heads of departments. You'll be working closely with these people so you want to understand what's going on from day 1.

Sit in on meetings: You'll need to get up to speed quickly. Being proactive about getting involved in meetings, alongside arranging your own, will help you understand how the business works and will go a long way in building your reputation as a proactive GC.

Have a presence: We don't mean wearing a distinctive suit; we mean including yourself across all relevant channels so people know where to find you, both in person and across digital platforms.

Be direct: Rather than spending weeks and weeks in shared meetings trying to figure out what people really want from you, ask them when you first meet. Asking "How do you define success when working with Legal?" tells you a lot more about what is expected and lets you get to work straight away.

Get to know your team: You'll be working closely with other teams across the business. By getting to know them, you remove any potential barrier to them reaching out to you when something goes wrong, or when they need some advice.



And don't forget about your own team. Without good relationships, rapport and working processes within your own team, the relationships with the wider business will count for nothing. Strained relationships within the team will create a bottleneck, contributing to a perception of legal as stifling. This is the last way you want to be perceived.

Set expectations

You've been through a rigorous process to get the job. You know your job description inside out and you've got the skill set to succeed.

But you need to set expectations. By no means does this mean lowering them; it just means getting aligned. A key part of your job is to advise the C-Suite. If they expect one thing from you while you pursue something different, achieving great success in what you set out to do will look like failure. If expectations aren't set up clearly quickly, it'll be a set-up for a strained relationship.

But, by making a good first impression, getting to know the people you're working with and building strong relationships, you can set clear expectations — both of what you can achieve and what they need from them. Doing this helps you position yourself as an authority for positive change, and someone that can be relied on to bring a vision to life.

Legal departments are often accused, however unfairly, of being too slow. Being reactive.

Stifling progress. One of your major priorities should be to reverse this: be proactive, contribute actively, and set clear expectations.

Finding out from your colleagues what they expect from you means you won't be waiting for them to come to you for help; you'll be able to be more helpful, faster. And by setting expectations on what a good working relationship looks like, you're both working towards the same outcome based on shared expectations.



Create a plan for success

Once expectations are established, you need to set out a plan for how to meet them. Remember that if you aren't seen as a contributor to the strategic goals of your organization, legal will be viewed as a cost center.



Check-in regularly: Set regular meetings, including clear agendas, as soon as you start — but also regularly. In your first 100 days, weekly or biweekly meetings can make sure that you're staying aligned with teams, particularly the C-Suite, so expectations stay lined up.

Make the expectations clear: If either party leaves with any doubt about what's expected and why, this could be a recipe for trouble down the road. These expectations should set out what's possible, what isn't and when it can be accomplished by. That way, you give yourself room to overdeliver — helping you become a valued player in the organization and a clear direction setter.

Be specific in your planning: When setting tasks and dates, be specific and efficient. Set due dates, properly assign tasks, and make sure everyone knows what they're doing.

But no matter how many plans you make or how detailed you make them, get ready to live in the world of a GC:

things are going to be sprung on you and, to the person with the request, almost everything is “urgent”.



Lupl’s [matter templates](#) are here to help get you started quickly. Whether it’s reviewing and building a suite of company policies, building a plan for data breach incident response, or fine-tuning an internal process, Lupl’s matter templates are like pre-built matters that have everything you need to get from A to B.

Rather than emailing a colleague to check if something’s done, or someone emailing you to check, ticking off a task in a matter lets everyone know it’s complete. Not only does this help you save time and keep organized, it keeps everyone in the loop and lined up on what to expect.

Embrace technology

Is it possible to make a strong first impression, while improving communication and collaboration — and streamline processes, all at the same time? Turns out it is, thanks to technology.



Technology is changing the way we do everything, from scanless shopping to consumer tools (hello, online banking) — but legal is lagging behind. As of 2021, just 37% of legal service providers are currently using legal technology.⁵ But even when technology is being used, the legal sector often doesn't implement it properly. Tech stacks are often bloated and contain software that's outdated or ill-fitting.

“But it gets the job done,” you might be thinking. What's the point of spending time onboarding or migrating to new tech? Not only is embracing the right tech easy to set up and streamlining your workflow, it's also the best way to both set a new direction and set yourself up as an authority for positive change.

Unite your tech stack...

The emphasis is on the *right* tech. If tech is disconnected, not only does it create daily friction, the gaps can even present a cyber security risk, potentially leading to a dreaded [data breach](#). As a new GC, you'll need to get up to date with your organization's security situation as quickly as possible. Getting caught out in your first 100 days is not a good look.

But being able to show your grasp of new technology and how it can improve processes in your organization — now that's a good look.

Get to know the tech you're using:

First things first — you need to know what tech your organization and your department is currently using. That way you [understand what's slowing things down](#) and what needs to be changed.

Organize your tech:

Discard what you're not using and bring together what you do, so your tech and your tasks are in one place.

Embracing tech doesn't have to mean a messy and complicated overhaul of your legal workflow. Using a platform like Lupl brings your tech stack together. And once it's together you can get to work — just as easily. Lupl is a [legal project management platform](#) that has been developed by lawyers, for lawyers, to help get these things done!

Lupl can connect to whatever you use, uniting your tech stack and unifying your workflow.

It has integrations galore, including:

- Slack, Zoom, Teams
- Sharepoint, OneDrive, Google Drive, NetDocs and iManage
- Outlook and Gmail
- WhatsApp
- Docusign
- And with the upcoming launch of our Open APIs, whatever you use can be configured to connect.

Pro Tip:

Cybersecure legal technology like Lupl can help you from day one. Fully compliant with SOC 2 security standards, Lupl makes file and communication encryption a walk in the park by ensuring the only people who can access your information are the people you want.

And with the rise of this new legal tech, a new GC starting out today has more potential for growth and expansion in its first 100 days than it would have had even a few years ago. With new tech, you can make a splash.



...and streamline your processes

You're going to be asked for timeframes, dates, and deadlines. What's the status of this? Where's my update on that? You need to know the answer to these questions. But you also need to be able to articulate them clearly. Getting things organized and efficient is the best way to do this.

You might be getting questions through email, WhatsApp, Slack, and all manner of apps and platforms —

and replying on the same or different platforms. If these platforms aren't integrated together, the process of simply responding to a message can be sprawling, clunky and time-consuming.

But with the right technology, you can unite these processes, making life easier for you and the rest of the organization.

Pro Tip

We've all spent time searching through folders and apps for that one document, that response, that contract. By having the apps in one place, and keeping all information in relevant folders (perhaps within a matter template), you can streamline how you find and retrieve information.

And the ripple effects of embracing tech will be felt throughout the organization, not just making your

department's processes more efficient, but the whole business too. This way, you can set yourself up as an agent of innovation — sending your department, and the business, in a positive new direction.



Communicate and collaborate effectively

‘You know what working in legal is like.’

Of course, you need to know the ins and outs of black letter law; but you also know that getting tasks completed depends on communication and collaboration. In other words, it depends on teamwork. And as a GC, this only becomes more important.

Good communication doesn't just mean being able to stand up and speak clearly. People are working from all over the world at different times. So it's also about being able to set clear instructions, collaborate with others on matters and projects, and make sure everybody knows what you're doing and what they're supposed to be doing.

Whether within your team, the C-Suite, clients or outside counsel, you need to be able to set tasks effectively, align on expectations

and make sure everyone has the information they need. Good communication empowers collaboration, which means you get stuff done. Poor communication means you don't.

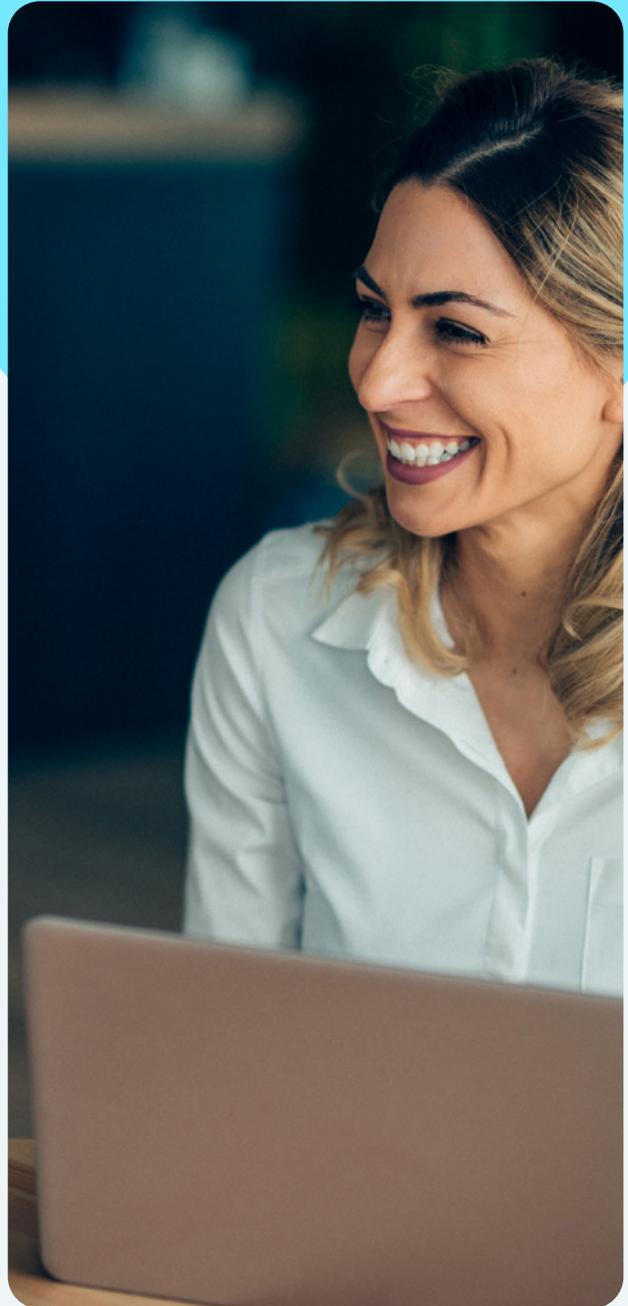
Without communicating well, you won't be able to set clear expectations, explain the value of new technology, build strong relationships or make a good first impression. In short, you won't be able to succeed at most of the things you should be within your first 100 days.



‘So, where is all this communication taking place?’

Pretty much everywhere. Collaboration happens across multiple platforms with varying degrees of success. That’s because sharing information and collaborating across various documents on several different platforms can be tricky. But by using project management tools designed for legal, you can make it easy by:

- Assigning tasks to the right people, at the right time.
- Setting clear due dates.
- Seeing whether tasks have been completed, so you don’t need to email someone to check.
- And, at last, reducing all those emails!



Make a change from day 1

Lupl is a plug-and-play system. No complicated onboarding, no long user manuals, no time spent checking compatibility and integration settings. You can get set up in 30 seconds, and hit the ground running. Nevermind changing things by Day 100 — with Lupl, you can set things in motion from Day 1.

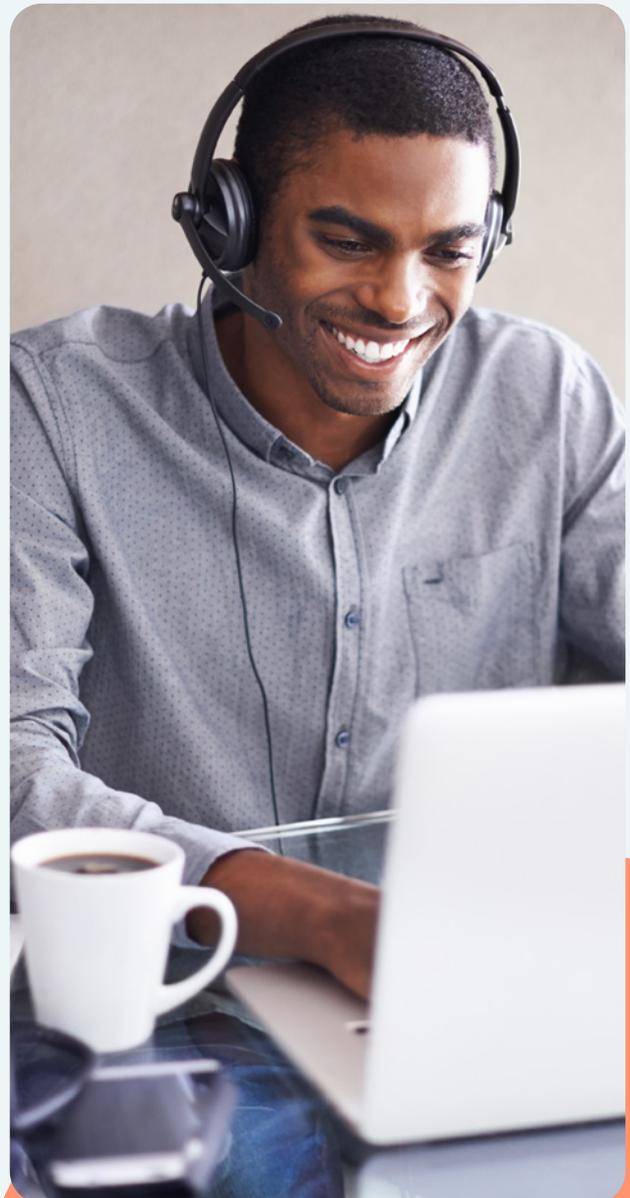
A tool like this might seem like a small change — a micro innovation — initially. But micro changes can have macro impacts. Yes, there's lots for you to do and lots you can change. But choosing the right tool, like Lupl, can start a ripple of improvements across your business as soon as you start.

With communication made quicker and collaboration easier, productivity increases. Knowledge sharing becomes more efficient too. All of which helps not only satisfy your stakeholders but demonstrate the value you're bringing to the business as a proactive GC.

Over and above this, good communication — in person and across digital platforms — means you can express how legal has contributed to helping departments,

and the overall business, achieve their goals.

And since you've improved communication across the organization, it's easier for you to communicate how you've made this improvement. Win-win.



Know your business inside out

You might have specialized in a handful of topics before you became GC. Now, you need to be a specialist in everything in the industry you're working in to be able to add value to all teams.

The clue's in the name — general counsel means that people will be coming to you from all over to ask for advice, and you're expected to have the answers. The quicker you become an industry expert, the easier these situations will be and the faster legal crises will be dealt with. So you've got to get to know your new industry.

You'll also need to know the direction of the company so that you can see the bigger picture of what's happening, and where it's all going. This helps to ensure that problem-solving doesn't occur in a vacuum,

so a solution today doesn't cause a problem tomorrow.

Doing your own research is great, but every department has expertise in that part of the business and the wider industry. There will always be someone who's up for a chat, so you can learn something while also cementing your reputation as someone who's not afraid to ask for help when they need it.

This means getting to know your stakeholders within the business, so you should take time to understand the processes of, and how to add value to, teams like:

- The C-Suite
- Sales team
- Customer Success Team
- IT Team

Knowledge and information sharing

When you were fresh out of law school, you knew black letter law but you didn't know the practicalities of how to get things done. Similarly, on becoming a GC you know the letter of the law, but you don't know everything about your new business yet and you don't know all the processes for getting things done.

Getting up to speed is the key to doing your job effectively. To do this, business knowledge, know-how (knowledge of how to get things done) and information need to be shared effectively.

Communication goes both ways. As GC, everyone expects you to be the expert on everything. But it's also about making sure you get the information you need. Lupl keeps knowledge and information centralized, so everyone who needs to gain access and contribute can do so efficiently.



Centralize your information:

Keeping relevant information together in one place, from contact information to research, means no more searching through folder after folder. Lupl's browser extension, Pins, lets you pin research to matters, so everything is kept within a single workspace.

Clear channels of

communication: Alongside ready-made matter templates, Lupl lets you create customized templates tailored to your needs. A single place for information to be stored and shared ensures that you've got the most up-to-date information, saving time in the process.

Create matters for internal information sharing:

Why not create matters within a department or for specific people or topics? This helps to establish a clear place for communication and project management. You can break down silos between departments, and create a know-how and knowledge repository.

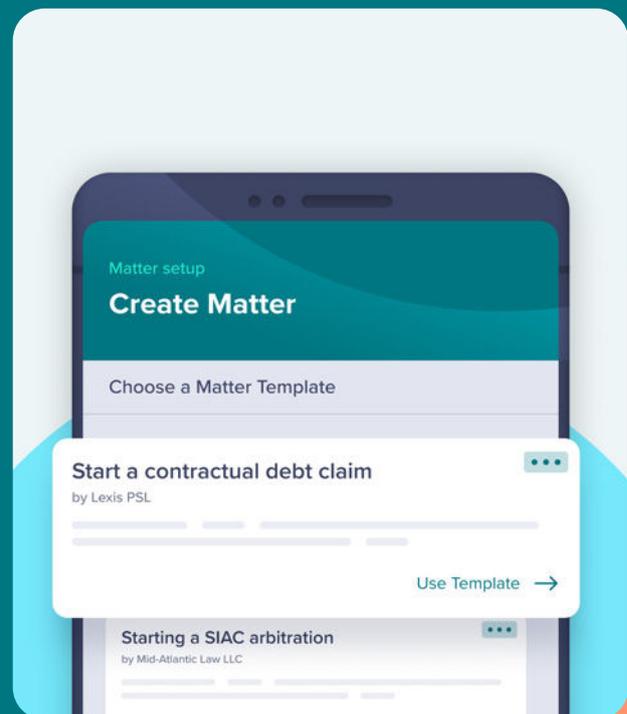
Embrace the challenge and the change

Starting your journey as a new general counsel can be a nerve-racking experience. But it's also an exciting one. And today, with new legal tech emerging, there's perhaps never been a better time to put your stamp on the role and move your organization in a new, positive direction.

By following the strategies set out here, you can lead the charge and be the voice for positive change — turning a successful first 100 days as GC into a successful 200, 300, 400... you get the picture.

We developed Lupl to help lawyers be successful in their roles, and it's our mission to empower lawyers and clients to work together better. Lupl isn't just another law tool that gets added to the tech stack and gradually floats away. Created by lawyers, for lawyers, Lupl unites your tech stack, improves communication, makes knowledge sharing easy and streamlines your processes.

As a plug-and-play system, it's easy to get started. So easy, in fact, you can get set up and use the app in under a minute. Now that's a good first impression.



Get in touch to find out how Lupl can help you hit the ground running

Book a demo today

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