



Geeta Krishnan

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What encouraged you to become a CS?

My interest was to become professionally qualified, and hold a position of responsibility. I was working in a public sector bank, and wanted to do something different. I did my CS at a time when not many knew about the profession and what work it entailed. My uncle, who was a CS, provided me the details, and encouraged me to join the course.

How do you see the role of a CS evolving over the next decade?

The scope of a Company Secretary's job profile has been evolving in the last decade. Corporate Boards are realising their value-add beyond being simply a meeting cum compliance facilitator. The next decade will see CS' occupying Board positions, and more of them in advisory roles, steering corporates towards an active compliance culture.

Is it important to connect with IDs between meetings? If so, how do you do it?

Yes, it is good to connect with the Independent Directors between meetings because they come with their varied skill sets, and interaction with them helps gain an insight into their perspective, and what their ask is from the management.

I generally message the director(s) asking for few minutes time to speak, specifying the advice required from them, be it on any agenda or related matter, or related to their core competencies. To my good fortune, they have always been very forthcoming, in spite of their busy schedules.

Considering the increasing demands made on a CS, how do you manage your time?

I have always had the habit of maintaining a day-wise work diary, which also doubles up as my 'Things to do Today' list. Important milestones are marked in it- eg. Board/ Committee meeting dates, date of completion of specific periodic compliances etc. In case of specific projects like raising of capital, conducting an AGM/postal ballot, specific approvals from regulators etc., I prepare an activity and timeline chart. Work targets are set accordingly with my team, including who is to do what, and by when. This is reviewed with the team on a daily basis when we have specific projects, and periodically for all other matters.

What challenges do you face as a CS?

The challenges are varied viz.

- The role of a CS is not very well understood by the other management team members. Sometimes, we need to convince them of our role and that we mean business.
- Considering the fact that regulators are coming up with new regulations and amendments so frequently, keeping track of all these amendments, and implementing them in time bound manner, has become a challenge.
- Lack of timely flow of information to the CS team.
- Leak of information available with the CS team in the form of Agenda and minutes.
- Managements preferring confirmation of advice on corporate law from external advocates/counsels.

What good practices, not prescribed by law, have you put in place?

As a CS, we deal with directors, senior management teams and shareholders on a regular basis. All these groups have different interests, but need information/clarifications from the CS team. Few good practices are :

- Fixing the calendar of Board/ Committee meetings on an annual basis in consultation with the Board;
- Preview meetings of the respective functional team with the MD prior to sending out agenda;
- Discussing important agenda matters with the Chairperson of the Committee/ Board prior to the meeting;
- Going through the important circulars/ letters cited in the agenda notes, attaching them for ready reference, if required;
- Standardisation of various notes going to the Board/ Committees;
- System- based alerts for completing periodic compliances.

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