Scenario 2
Mentoring and Training (Nina)

Nina is near the end of her second year as in-house counsel at Fame Bank. Nina began working for Fame Bank shortly after graduating from law school, making her the first non-lateral hire in the Legal Department’s history. In addition to the typical adjustments associated with transitioning from law school to law practice, as a Latina woman, Nina often feels isolated because she is the only person of color in the legal department. She is also the youngest attorney in the department.

Nina has worked on a wide range of projects and issues. Naturally, most of what she sees is new to her because she is a first year attorney. Nina’s supervisor is easily accessible when Nina has questions regarding her assignments. However, Nina has never worked closely with her supervisor on assignments, and is unsure of whether her questions are necessary and appropriate, or whether she is asking questions to which she should already know the answer. Additionally, while Nina’s supervisor consistently gives her new work, Nina rarely receives feedback and is unsure of how her superiors view the quality of her work. Her performance reviews consist of high quantitative ratings, but qualitative information is nonexistent. Fame Bank generally promotes from within, with promotion decisions made subjectively on performance evaluations and a written review from the relevant department head. In Nina’s case, her supervisor reports to the General Counsel (“GC”), who is head of the Legal Department. Nina generally has little to no interaction with the GC.

One day, Nina received an email from the GC expressing his disagreement with her legal counsel to the Marketing Department regarding a trademark issue. He stated that while her analysis of the issue was correct, she was too risk-averse in her recommendations on how the Marketing Department should proceed. Nina’s supervisor and the Marketing Director to whom she gave the counsel were copied on the email. This is the first substantive feedback Nina had ever received on an assignment she was given.

Discussion questions:

1. How should Nina respond to the GC? To the supervisor? To the Marketing Department?
2. How should Nina’s supervisor respond?

3. Is there any advice you would give to the GC?

4. What advice would you give Nina about obtaining feedback on future assignments and receiving qualitative feedback during her performance reviews?

5. What advice do you have for Nina with respect to relating and interacting with her colleagues and the GC?

6. What advice would you give Nina on her long-term career planning considering the facts of the scenario?

7. What are some effective training and mentoring strategies that senior in-house attorneys can implement when working with junior in-house attorneys coming straight from law school?

8. What are some measures that compensation and promotion decision-makers can take to ensure that they are getting a broad and consistent level of exposure to everyone in their department?