



Basswood Counsel

Is Your Business Ready For Embedded Legal leadership?

Your Legal Foundation Checklist

You don't need more legal advice. You need to know whether the legal foundation under your business is keeping pace with where you're headed. This framework helps you figure that out in five minutes.

The Five Signs

Most growing companies hit a point where one-off legal help stops being enough — but they don't always recognize the moment. These five signals tell you whether you've already passed it.

- 1 Your documents tell different stories. Your pitch says one thing. Your cap table says another. Your board minutes say something else — or don't exist. Investors should find one consistent narrative under the hood.
- 2 You're making big decisions without legal input at the table. Not review after the fact — legal thinking during the conversation. Pricing, partnerships, equity promises, regulatory positioning. If your lawyer only hears about these after you've committed, you're building risk into every growth decision.
- 3 Your contracts slow deals down instead of speeding them up. Every agreement that requires a fresh negotiation from scratch is friction. Companies that close efficiently have templates, playbooks, and pre-negotiated positions ready to go.
- 4 Someone has already flagged your documentation. An advisor. A potential investor. A board member. If anyone with experience has suggested your records "need work," take that seriously. They're being polite about something that will cost you leverage later.
- 5 You're planning to raise, pursue acquisition, or enter regulated markets in the next 6–12 months. These events don't start when the term sheet arrives. They start now — with the foundation you're either building or neglecting.

Interpreting Your Answers

No. of Signs	Recommended Legal Approach
0-1	You're likely fine with project-based legal support for now. Revisit this in six months.
2	You're approaching the threshold. Start thinking about what embedded legal leadership would look like for your stage and budget.
3+	You've passed the point where reactive legal help serves you well. The gaps are compounding, and the cost of delay will show up in your next high-stakes moment.

What “Embedded” Actually Means

This isn't about hiring a full-time General Counsel. For most growth-stage companies, that's premature. A fractional General Counsel gives you executive-level legal leadership on a part-time basis — someone who knows your business deeply enough to anticipate problems, not just respond to them. Think of it as the difference between a doctor you see when you're sick and one who knows your health history and keeps you from getting sick in the first place.

The Real Question

This Legal Foundation Checklist isn't a sales pitch. It's a mirror. The goal is clarity — so you can make the decision that fits your stage, your pace, and your priorities. If what you see tells you it's time for a deeper conversation, I'm here for that. No pressure, no pitch — just an honest assessment of where you are and what might make sense next.

Let's Talk

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