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You don't have to be huge to impress Cisco's GC

The general counsel of the world's largest networking company is thinking small.

Cisco Systems GC Mark Chandler said last week that he's "looking at more and more small and mid-size firms" when doling out the company's \$50 million-plus worth of legal work each year.

Chandler was speaking Tuesday at the Cal Law Business conference on small law firm productivity (Cal Law is the online version of *The Recorder*). He said Cisco is eager to work with firms that are speedy, responsive and transparent.

For example, he said, the company's legal department counts only one patent attorney among its 120 lawyers. So Cisco relies on many small and mid-size patent firms — some local, some far away — to file most of its 1,000 patent applications a year. In the Bay Area those include 12-lawyer Hickman Palermo Truong & Becker of San Jose, 22-lawyer Beyer Weaver & Thomas of Mountain View and 75-lawyer Blakely, Sokoloff, Taylor & Zafman of Sunnyvale.

Routine employment matters also tend to get outsourced, and not necessarily to megafirms. More important than size is transparency — the firms that work with Cisco provide the company's attorneys with access to the law firm's knowledge bases and help them track work electronically as it progresses. Chandler compared



RECORDER FILE (2002)

IN CONTROL: Cisco General Counsel Mark Chandler says outside firms who want his business must allow online access to their work.

it to a consumer being able to track online the processing and shipping of a book order from Amazon.com.

That kind of access is more important to Chandler than having 500 lawyers. "Forty, 50, 60, 20 lawyers is not an issue for us," Chandler said. "Three lawyers is not an issue for us." What is important is that information be "available to people when they need it."

Cisco has used eight-lawyer Friedman Dumas & Springwater of San Francisco

and nine-lawyer Bialson, Bergen & Schwab of Palo Alto on finance matters; 22-lawyer Trucker Huss of San Francisco and 25-lawyer General Counsel Associates of Mountain View on human resource matters; and 27-lawyer Sideman & Bancroft of San Francisco for litigation.

Chandler jokingly mentioned one other reason he likes using small firms. When he hands over a case, "I know the maximum number of timekeepers that will be on it."

— Scott Graham