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Protect, Innovate, and Collaborate

Skills and Professional Development



Although we're a couple months into 2017, whether personal or professional, there's something about the promise of a new year's "clean slate" that leads us to make resolutions to be — and do — better. As leaders not only in the law department, but in the company as a whole, in-house counsel have a unique responsibility to make sure things are done right. We do our best efforts to ensure our organizations are compliant with ever-changing regulations; we work diligently to ensure that client (and company) data is secure and protected; and we provide a host of other services that could fill this page and the next. In order to perform our essential functions better, we need law departments that function as an integrated piece of the business.

The *ACC Law Department Management Report* echoed this sentiment, noting that in addition to the law department's connection to all business units, the general counsel of today is strategic in focus, as well as "more involved in assuring the legal, ethical, and reputational integrity of the whole enterprise." I couldn't have said it better myself. As the role of general counsel has evolved — especially in recent years with issues surrounding cybersecurity and compliance being top of mind for every businessperson in the global marketplace — it has become imperative for our colleagues to seek us out for more than "legal" advice. Apparently, they are doing just that.

According to the survey, 65 percent of respondents stated that executive teams in their organizations "almost always" seek the legal department's input on business decisions, while 75 percent said that legal department members "almost always" meet with business leaders to discuss operational issues and risk areas. The survey also confirmed the GC's strategic focus, with 65 percent of those surveyed reporting that their legal departments "almost always" contribute to the organization's strategic planning efforts. I highly recommend that you visit acc.com/survey-reports for more from this report, as well as trends in cybersecurity, what's keeping CLOs up at night, and more.

In our never-ending quest to be and do better, chances are that your company has implemented some new technology intended to streamline lengthy processes and create efficiencies (perhaps resulting in one of those sleepless nights mentioned above!). An area where legal departments can once again remain ahead of the curve is artificial intelligence (AI). A topic of much discussion in our industry and beyond, the cover story of this issue focuses on the innovative uses of AI, and how in-house counsel can implement them and potentially transform the modern legal department. The authors point out several innovative uses of AI, including its ability to parse information into clauses, sections, and keywords during contract review, as well as its applications in IP and employment law.

Other articles in this law department management focused issue include a look at data privacy in Singapore, tips for startup company GCs, strategies for creating and implementing a small law compliance program, and the risks and rewards of filing an initial public offering. This article in particular looks at ways in-house counsel can further demonstrate their value by helping their organization expand its international presence, while navigating the challenges that come along with taking a company public.

In addition to this issue and the research I mentioned above, I encourage you to also stay up-to-date on the resources and events being developed by the Law Department Management Committee, as well as within your local chapter. For example, [ACC Europe](#) recently held an event in Milan titled “Artificial Intelligence: A Legal Perspective” and the committee recently held a virtual roundtable on “Creating a New Legal Department.”

The opportunity to do and be better is something that we don’t need a new year, or even a new week to inspire. All it takes is a need for a new compliance manual, the implementation of AI software in your contract review process, or the decision by your CEO and BOD to go public to inspire your greatness. After all, your role is one of protection but also of innovation. You’re ready for whatever comes next, and ACC is here to help.

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