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Insights from Microsoft's Chief Legal Officer Hossein Nowbar

Interviews and Profiles



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ACC Global Board Member and Microsoft Chief Legal Officer Hossein Nowbar shared valuable career insights and exciting technology developments during a recent virtual chat moderated by Pia Biswas, principal corporate counsel at Microsoft.

Nowbar's background, from his youth in Iran to his broad legal experience, gave him a unique perspective on the role of law and its societal impact.

His 26-year tenure at Microsoft, including his current role as chief legal officer, has shaped his understanding of technology's role in our lives.



The multifaceted role of the CLO

Nowbar emphasized the multifaceted nature of the CLO role: it's not just about legal expertise — it involves being the company's conscience, listening actively and inclusively, and understanding finance, and customer needs.

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He highlighted the transformative potential of generative AI, which he considers the most significant technological shift in his lifetime. Nowbar shared the importance of staying informed and using generative AI tools for efficiency. He referred to Microsoft's proactive steps related to intellectual property and Microsoft's Customer Copyright Commitment to navigate the evolving landscape.

Essential values for aspiring CLOs

For aspiring CLOs, Nowbar shared four core values: transparency, trust, curiosity, and collective impact. He stressed the importance of values-based leadership, openness to feedback, and the significance of mentors.

When it comes to talent development, Nowbar underscored the importance of psychological safety and constructive feedback within teams. He advocates for a culture that prioritizes learning and development over fear of failure. What is the worst career advice he's received? Avoid challenges! Nowbar's best career advice is to continuously challenge oneself and embrace discomfort.

The value of professional networks

Nowbar praised ACC for giving a voice to in-house practitioners and fostering a supportive network. He concluded with advice to leverage networks like ACC for continuous personal and professional growth, and to be open to diverse perspectives.

This session provided a wealth of knowledge for in-house counsel, illustrating the balance between legal acumen and broader business and interpersonal skills essential for today's legal leaders.

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