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ACC Europe Chapter Spotlight

Community

Interviews and Profiles



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What brought you to Forcepoint and what do you like most about being in-house counsel?

Relatively unusually in Ireland, I've been a group counsel for over 20 years, which is most of my professional career. When I started in-house over 20 years ago, less than five percent of the qualified profession were working in-house, but now it's more like 20 percent of the profession. Employers in Ireland now have a better understanding of the Return on Investment for having embedded, readily available, company informed professionals, who understand the business history, current models and future vision, the risk appetite, and commercial consequences of decisions — and not just having the “legals” flung over the wall to be rubber stamped by external counsel. Maybe I was an accidental pioneer that was ahead of the curve, or maybe I was lucky. Either way, I do not see myself going back to private practice since I am honored to have true partnerships with select law firms that truly partner with me and the team, making it a win-win scenario.

As legal counsel for Forcepoint International, what challenges do you currently face, and how are you addressing them?

Well, obviously COVID-19 is a big challenge globally for everyone. The human element correctly means that employees and our customers are our first concern. Like all organizations, we are pivoting to much more remote working across all of our jurisdictions. This has impacts on health and safety, employee motivation, productivity and retention, data security, product development, and many internal business processes as we adapt to the new normal as they evolve. Staying connected is a different dynamic now, so employee morale initiatives are very important.

What are some of the skills the next generation of in-house counsel need to hone?

I continue to believe that in-house counsel needs to understand from the outset that nothing is perfect and appropriate business risks can and should be borne when dealing with larger scale complex negotiations and agreements. Sometimes “good enough” individual clauses are indeed good enough in the totality from a commercial point of view. It's sometimes “lipstick on the pig,” where in a contract you get termination rights or indemnities, but in reality, it's an “eyes wide open decision,” depending on the due diligence and trust in the relationship. If that's done well, the contract is often secondary.



How did you first become involved in leadership in ACC Europe Chapter, and how has it helped you in your career?

I decided to go to an ACC Europe conference in Amsterdam about 10 years ago since Forcepoint was a member. The content, speakers, and overall collegiality were really relevant and compelling.

How does your chapter promote meaningful connections and provide value to its members?

After the ACC Europe conference 10 years ago, I really understood the value add of ACC Europe and have been a strong advocate ever since. ACC Europe has really evolved over the years to customize its product offering to be relevant, on-point, and bring real to in-house counsel.

What are ways members can become involved in your chapter?

Sign up to ACC Europe and contact your [local Country Rep](#)! Every local legal community is small where we can truly learn from each other and influence the landscape. So, whether it's regular, relevant webinars or mutual assistance on particular business issues, it's basically "together we stand" where the sum of the parts makes us all stronger and more sustainable as commercially driven in-house counsel.

How does being an ACC member help you gain time in your schedule? What does having more time mean for you?

The value of the materials that ACC Europe produces is amazing. For example, it is truly informative to build business cases with real data, metrics, and market norms gathered from chapter colleagues, as that's what speaks to budget holders at board level to understand resourcing and compliance needs.

How have connections made through ACC helped you to be the best version of yourself? How have they made you the best or a better lawyer?

The ability to “sense check” things with in-house peers is just pure gold! If I have questions about a country specific query or a niche area of law, the likelihood is that with over 3,000 members throughout Europe, somebody else has been down this path. Being able to connect with local in-house counsel, and thereafter speak with authority or instruct the correct external counsel saves lots of time and money. And it’s a two way street — I have the advantage of many years of working for a US multinational company with a global footprint. So, having navigated our international expansion and contraction over the years, there are many great learnings that I’m happy to share with peers and in-house colleagues to make us all the best version of ourselves!

How has your ACC membership helped you shape the culture of your organization? Specifically, what changes in culture have you seen?

The diversity of ACC Europe means that members can learn a lot from local country peers. For example, the employment landscape in Europe is not always fully understood by US HQ, so real world examples are very valuable to manage budget and expectations. Equally, we are constantly charged with “doing more with less,” so the [ACC Legal Operations group](#) is a game changer! Net-net, my personal experience is that ACC Europe — and its knowledge content and peer to peer networking opportunities — allows ACC Europe members to be the best version of ourselves as in-house counsel, so surely that’s a win-win proposition in terms of membership. It certainly is for me and my team!

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