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2020 Top 10 30-Something: Adam Nagorski

Interviews and Profiles





CORPORATE COUNSEL

UL

AUSTIN, TX, USA

AGE: 40*

***39 AT TIME OF NOMINATION**

Adam Nagorski was a day into his GC role when his new boss asked him to help the company resolve an immigration matter, something he had no prior experience handling. He quickly realized more novel questions were coming, and within the first week of moving in-house, had joined his local ACC chapter to build a network.

Adam recalls that frenzied first week in-house: “Suddenly I got thrust into this job where not only am I the only lawyer but I’m expected to know everything there is to know about any aspect of law, which of course nobody can do. It was quite an overwhelming feeling.”

As general counsel of Emergo, he oversaw nearly 30 subsidiaries stretched across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas. Before a medical device can go to market, it needs to clear regulatory hurdles in whatever jurisdiction it will be sold. Emergo helps medical device manufacturers — an expansive category of companies creating products as varied as a dentist’s simple metal pick to a complex bionic eye — access almost the entire world’s medical marketplace.

“It’s really nice to have that core set of people who understood the sort of challenges I was going through,” Adam says about attending his first ACC events. He learned that being in-house meant operating from experience and moving quickly. He took the lesson to heart and searched for ways to build a legal department that protected the company while helping the business remain nimble and customer-focused.

Among the things he identified for improvement: Emergo’s standard service agreements. Previously, contracts were negotiated on a project-by-project basis and weren’t well tailored to the business’ unique legal and business needs. Under Adam’s direction, all of the company’s contract templates were re-written from scratch, better protecting the company while being clear and fair to its clients. Emergo’s insurer called the reworked contracts “an underwriter’s dream.” Adam also developed risk management guidelines and became a resource employees could directly come to for help resolving thorny challenges to the business. In order to encourage speedy dispute resolution, the new contract agreements assigned financial risk to rejecting settlement offers.

Under Adam’s leadership, the legal department was able to help grow the business, which was coveted by UL, a 125-year-old safety certification company. And once again Adam was forced into an unfamiliar situation: negotiating the merger of Emergo with UL. But just like before, he was ready for the challenge.

Because UL has a reputation as an impartial judge of safety, Adam knew it was imperative that the combined company take care to identify and avoid any conflicts of interest (even just perceived ones). After the integration, Adam continues to support Emergo while taking on new responsibilities across the UL enterprise, including by helping UL to identify and mitigate against risks presented by new services or acquisitions.

In addition to his primary job at UL, Adam uses his in-house legal skills by volunteering as agency counsel to SAFE, his city’s women’s and children’s shelter, and by serving as outside general counsel to Austin Bold FC, a professional soccer team. He is also active in civil rights organizations, and is a longtime board member of his local chapter of the Anti-Defamation League.

And now, after nearly a decade of in-house experience, he finds himself back at his local ACC Austin Chapter, but this time, as president-elect. He is excited to pay forward the knowledge he learned when he was just starting out as an in-house lawyer. “It’s great to give back to the organization that has given me so much, helped me develop critical skills, and introduced me to so many colleagues and friends,” he reflects.

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