

Member Spotlight

Joe Klauke

Senior Counsel

Mondelēz International



In current position for: 6 years

Years in-house: 20 years

Law School: University of Chicago

Undergrad: University of Illinois (B.A. in Economics)

The best thing about my current job is: Fun people and products. What's better than Oreos?

What I look forward to in my career: Our headquarters is moving downtown next year, so that will be a new adventure.

The most challenging thing about my current job is: The volume of work can be high at times. I cover a lot of areas, including global professional services and technology agreements, anywhere from large outsourcing arrangements to software as a service. I also support the Finance area and any agreements that are regional in scope, from transportation to marketing services to energy and operations. There is a lot going on, so it's a balancing act, requiring me to prioritize and set expectations with my stakeholders.

My most pivotal career move: Going to law school. After college, I worked as an evaluator for the General Accounting Office (now the Government Accountability Office), the investigative arm of Congress. I worked there for 5 years and liked the idea of influencing public policy, but the Congress could disregard our recommendations. That was frustrating, so I decided to go to law school to have more of a decision-maker role.

The worst job I ever held was: I don't want to characterize any job as "bad" because I think we learn valuable lessons from all of them. I enjoyed working in-house for McDonald's and had to work in a restaurant for a week, as all employees did. It was cool when my kids came in and I made their happy meals.

Hardest lesson I have learned as a lawyer: When I was just a couple of years out of law school, I was a litigator at a firm in Chicago, working on general commercial cases. I realized that the side that is "right" doesn't always win, and sometimes people do things just to annoy the other side (it was the first time I was ever hung-up on during a call). That was a little dismaying and weighed on my decision to focus on transactional law.

Advice I would give to new lawyers, in-house or otherwise: Take on tasks in all areas, diversify your practice. You never know what will spark your interest and lead you in a new and exciting direction.

What I like most about the ACC Chicago Chapter: The diversity summer intern program. I run our company's summer intern program, and we have had some phenomenal interns through the ACC.

My favorite pro bono or volunteer activity is: Last year we worked with Baker & McKenzie on a handbook for homeless children living on the streets around the world. We researched the laws in various countries; I did New Zealand. It was fun to learn the laws there and rewarding to think our work helped vulnerable kids.

I achieve work-life balance by: That's part of the reason I went in-house. Having no billable hours helps, and I have been blessed with supportive bosses. I put family events on my calendar and give them the same priority as business meetings.

If I were not practicing law, I would probably be: Either a comedian or a professional basketball player.

When I'm not working, I like to: Spend time with my wonderful wife and three "kids" -- they are all over 21, so I do not get to spend much time with them anymore. I like to stay active and play basketball, do yoga, and work out. I also like to travel and see live music.

My all-time favorite movie is: "It's a Wonderful Life." I can recite most of the lines, and do a decent Jimmy Stewart impression.

People may be surprised to learn that I: Hold a college basketball record - I was a walk-on for the Illini in the 80s. I got in a game, took one shot and made it, for a 100% shooting percentage.

The place I've never been but would most like to visit: Africa. My wife and I plan to go in September. Can't wait.