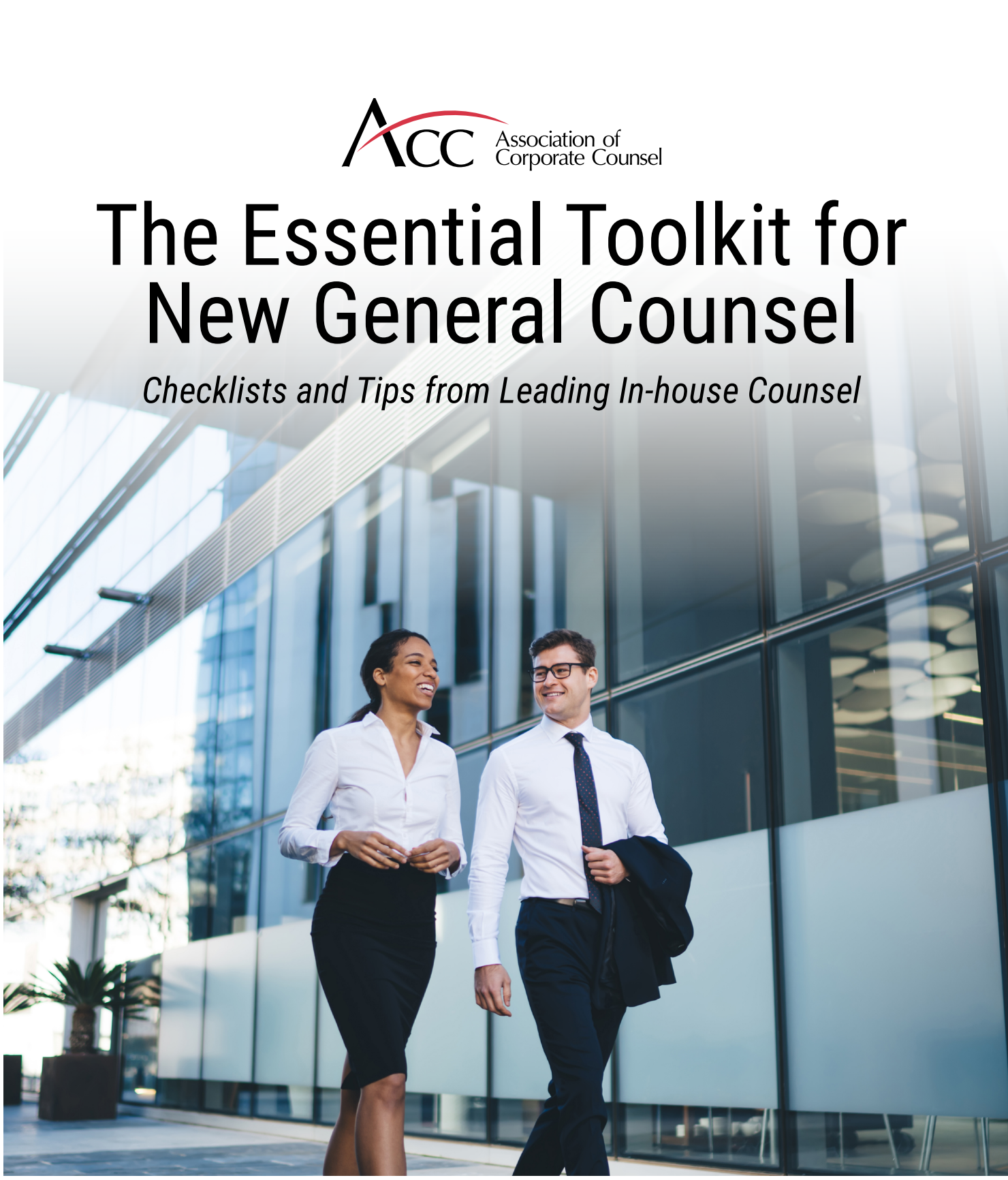




# The Essential Toolkit for New General Counsel

*Checklists and Tips from Leading In-house Counsel*



WHAT GENERAL COUNSEL SAY ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT:

**"This ACC Toolkit provides a unique and practical checklist of things that incoming and aspiring GCs should consider to give them a head start in building successful in-house legal teams."**

*Roel Staes, Senior Vice President, Legal, General Counsel Europe, FedEx Express*

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## Thank you to ACC members

The ACC team warmly thanks the global group of ACC members who shared in-house insight regarding this toolkit (*their input was personal and not on behalf of their organizations*):

**Bertil Majer**

*Chief Legal Officer, Sitecore*

**Krystal Saab**

*General Counsel, Bodybuilding.com*

**Malcolm Haack**

*Group General Counsel & Chief Compliance Officer, Orica*

**Matt Nolan**

*Assistant General Counsel at Honeywell, and former CLO of Safeguard Medical*

**Michelle Anglin**

*General Counsel, Reece Group*

**Roel Staes**

*Senior Vice President, Legal, General Counsel Europe, FedEx Express*

**Theo Kapodistrias**

*General Counsel, Evergen*

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There's rarely a

## GUIDE

for a new job

– particularly for a role as broad and varied as general counsel.  
*So, ACC decided to develop one!*

This toolkit centralizes years of expertise contributed by ACC members who have been in your position, and we have tailored it to offer you practical insights, strategic guidance, and the wisdom of your peers, whether you are:

- A first-time general counsel recently appointed to the position at a new company;
- A seasoned corporate veteran newly promoted to the role of general counsel; or
- An experienced general counsel moving to a different company.

Through checklists, expert tips, and practical guidance on the specific challenges that new general counsel face, I hope this resource will serve as a starting point to accelerate your onboarding, establish your seat at the executive table, and help you look at questions from a different perspective – not only to help you succeed but also to thrive as a leader.

This resource incorporates numerous contributions of several experienced, international ACC members who generously shared their knowledge and insights. I extend my heartfelt thanks to every ACC member who contributed to this toolkit. Your willingness to share your experiences strengthens the collective knowledge of in-house counsel around the globe.

Now it's your turn, as this document will continue to be updated and improved to make it as useful as possible. Please share your suggestions and feedback at [legalresources@acc.com](mailto:legalresources@acc.com).

Warmest regards,

**Veta T. Richardson**

PRESIDENT AND CEO  
ASSOCIATION OF CORPORATE COUNSEL

## Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is for **lawyers taking a new role as General Counsel** – whether you have served as GC before, or are taking your first GC role, moving from a law firm to an in-house position, or being promoted from within your organization. This toolkit offers insight regarding Chief Legal Officers' **priorities**, and **practical checklists** to help you succeed.

- As the General Counsel, you are in a **leadership role** at the highest level of your company.
- A General Counsel's duties go **beyond responsibility for the legal affairs** of the company.
- A successful General Counsel is also a **strategic thinker** and an influential voice in the C-suite. You are expected to offer strategic guidance and add value to the business.

## Where is this insight from?

The insight in this toolkit is mainly based on resources from the **ACC Resource Library** that the ACC team has reviewed and found relevant for those taking a new GC role. It is also based on the perspective of ACC members, experienced General Counsel and Chief Legal Officers who kindly shared input.

## The Association of Corporate Counsel

- The Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) is a global bar association.
- ACC promotes the common professional and business interests of in-house counsel through information, education, networking opportunities, and advocacy initiatives.
- The ACC community includes more than 45,000 members from around the world.
- ACC is invested in your success as a GC or CLO, advocates for you to have a "Seat at the Table" and provides value with resources for your team to succeed.
- Are you an in-house counsel? **Join us!** Learn, connect with peers, and boost your career.

Visit the ACC  
Resource Library

Find articles, checklists, and  
sample contracts and policies  
for CLOs and in-house counsel.

**Disclaimer:** *The information in this toolkit should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion on specific facts and should not be considered representative of the views of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) or any of its lawyers, unless so stated. This toolkit is not intended as a definitive statement on the subject, but rather to serve as a resource providing practical information to the reader.*





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ACC  
EVENTS

*for*

GCs &  
CLOs



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## 5 Key Points for New General Counsel

1. **Engage** with your CEO, C-suite peers, other business stakeholders, and your team. Build rapport and understand their goals.
2. **Know** business concepts. Learn your organization's business drivers and products.
3. **Offer** advice that advances business objectives, keeping in mind it is critical to be able to influence outcomes that are aligned with the organization's strategy.
4. **Establish** your role as a strategic leader with the C-suite and the board.
5. **Identify** metrics that measure your law department's performance. Achieve demonstrable wins and market them.

### Learn more

- [Read the findings](#) from the latest ACC Chief Legal Officers Survey.
- View the nine checklists below and the shortlists of resources at the end of the toolkit.

## 5 CLO Priorities for 2024

Here are five top-of-mind topics for Chief Legal Officers (not just new GCs), based on data from the [2024 ACC Chief Legal Officers Survey Report](#):

1. **Top issues that keep CLOs up at night:**
  - (1) Regulations and enforcement
  - (2) Privacy, data security, and cybersecurity threats
2. **Top strategic priority** for law departments: **Operational efficiency**
3. **Top tech area** in which CLOs plan to invest more: **Contract management**
4. **Top AI uses** that CLOs anticipate: **Document analysis and drafting**
5. **Top skills wanted:**

CLOs want **their teams** to develop:

  - (1) Business acumen
  - (2) Communication
  - (3) Executive presence

CLOs believe **their CEO wants them** to further develop:

  - (1) Business acumen
  - (2) Industry knowledge
  - (3) Leadership
  - (4) Financial acumen

## CHECKLIST 1



The most important skill for a CLO is their ability to influence an outcome that is aligned with their business's strategy.

**Malcolm Haack**

Group General Counsel &  
Chief Compliance Officer,  
Orica



## Five Steps for Your First 90 Days as GC

Get a strong start with tips from an experienced General Counsel.

### 1. Know your CEO's expectations about your role and the business strategy:

- Meet with your CEO and your peers in the C-suite.
- Develop a three-month plan, discuss it with the CEO, and ensure you are aligned.
- Ask the CEO about the business's strategic objectives, such as cost reduction, product development, or new markets.
- **If you are the first GC of your organization**, see the tips in [Checklist 7<sup>+</sup>](#) for educating the business regarding your role.

### 2. Reach out to your key stakeholders, and get to know them better:

- Discuss goals with the CEO, the board, peers, and other key business stakeholders, and get a better sense of their interests and values.
- Relationships and trust are key. Strengthen existing relationships. If you're a newcomer, start building them. When stakeholders view you as a partner, they're more likely to be receptive when you ask them to reconsider their plans.
- Meet with the organization's auditors and outside counsel.

### 3. Know and lead your team:

- Hold one-on-one meetings with your team members, and **listen**.
- If you have a multilayered department structure, schedule skip-level meetings.
- If possible, meet with your predecessor.
- Identify key players, and actively seek their ideas and feedback.
- Structure your team, with a focus on skills needed, diversity, and people's drive.
- Write, communicate, and reiterate your **leadership philosophy**. List your **values, expectations**, and your **main do's and don'ts for your team**.
- **If you are promoted from within the same company**, check out [transition tips<sup>+</sup>](#).

**NOTE:** Items marked with a "<sup>+</sup>" link to more in-depth information on this topic within this toolkit.



#### 4. Identify improvements and develop strategies:

- Review the entity's governance structure/processes. Plan improvements needed.
- Liaise with Finance, analyze your budget, and review outside counsel spend.
- Identify Legal's metrics, find efficiency gains, and pursue demonstrable wins.
- Coding expenses to track the cause of legal spend may help you make the case for an additional hire focused on the largest source of legal matters.
- Learn the corporate strategy and products. Discuss with business stakeholders.
- Start **developing legal strategies<sup>+</sup>** that advance key goals of the business and are customer-centric. Discuss the law department's strategy with the CEO.

#### 5. Are you new to the organization? Learn the company's business and culture:

- Review corporate filings, board materials, annual reports, governance documents (articles of incorporation, by-laws, etc.), and publications.
- Ask business colleagues about the organization's culture and internal dynamics.
- Become an expert regarding its operations, products, and revenue drivers.

### Learn more

« This checklist is mainly based on the following ACC resources and on insight from ACC members:

→ **Actions to Take During Your First Year as General Counsel**  
by Mark Roellig

→ **Are You A New General Counsel? Top Ten Actions to Ensure Your Success**  
by Mark Roellig

### TAKE ACTION: Write one or two steps that you plan to implement.

Describe	By what date?
1.	
2.	
Notes:	

NOTE: Items marked with a "+" link to more in-depth information on this topic within this toolkit.



## Seven Tips to Develop a Law Department Strategy

Below are tips based on insights from **Roel Staes**, Senior Vice President, Legal, General Counsel Europe of FedEx Express, and from **Michelle Anglin**, General Counsel of Reece Group

1. **START WITH THE BUSINESS.** First, meet with stakeholders one-on-one to learn about their role and function, and get insights on where they see the risks and opportunities. Ask your CEO to explain the strategic goals of the business.
2. **USE THE TAKEAWAYS TO DEVELOP A LAW DEPARTMENT STRATEGY** that supports these goals, focusing on priority risks and opportunities.
3. **INCLUDE QUANTIFIABLE METRICS**, measurable via technology and analytics reporting.
4. **DISCUSS THE STRATEGY WITH THE CEO, THEN PRESENT IT** at the executive and board or risk and audit committee level within your first 90-120 days. Request to make this a standing committee agenda item and/or a recurring internal executive update.
5. **IDENTIFY AREAS OF FOCUS.** Identify where Legal will focus its efforts, such as working more closely with certain business functions/units.
6. **ASSESS RESOURCES**, how to (re)organize Legal in a way that supports the strategy:
  - **In-house and outside counsel allocation.** For what matters can you/will you rely on in-house v. outside counsel or alternative legal service providers?
  - **In what cities or countries will law department members be located**, keeping in mind factors such as cost, local needs, and business priorities?
  - **Paralegal and legal ops professionals.** Are there tasks that you can/want to allocate to paralegals or legal operations professionals (if this is an option)?
  - **Determine the reporting structure** you need within your department.
  - **Map out the skills** needed to support the strategy. Consider practice areas, jurisdictions, language.
  - **If you are able to hire**, determine the adequate level of experience needed.
7. **ASSESS AND DRIVE YOUR TEAM'S CULTURE** to support the business strategy:
  - **Survey**, informally and/or formally, how Legal is perceived by the business teams and within the law department.
  - **Define the desired culture** for Legal, internally and in serving the business.
  - **Identify actions** to achieve the desired culture (e.g., training, or changes in personnel).



## Are You Promoted from Within? Transition to the Lead Role

Congratulations! You're already **familiar with your company's** operations, goals, and stakeholders. However, **your perspective shifts**.

You are now the legal team's leader, and the business looks to you as the top source of strategic law-minded guidance.

1. You may be **managing former peers**, which can be a challenging transition.
2. Don't let friendships with former peers turn into (or appear as) favoritism.
3. **Meet** with team members **one-on-one** about this transition, and **communicate** about your **priorities and expectations**.
4. **Find your leadership style** in your new role, and adjust it as needed.
5. Your organization's business leaders expect strategic guidance. Have one-on-one **big-picture conversations** with your CEO and C-Suite peers about business priorities, and steer your law department's strategy accordingly.
6. The top legal role can be lonely and heavy at times. Develop a support network. **Connect with peers**, use the **ACC Law Department Network**.
7. **Seek a mentor** who understands the demands of the job, ideally a GC/CLO.
8. Because you're not new, business colleagues may assume that you know everything about the business. **Spot and fill your knowledge gaps**, such as by connecting with key stakeholders in Finance, Product Development, and other departments.

*Hear tips from other General Counsel who were promoted from within:*

→ Connect with the **ACC Law Department Management Network**



Understanding and aligning with your boss's expectations may be the most important action for your success.

**Mark Roellig,** in *Are You A New General Counsel? Top Ten Actions to Ensure Your Success*



→ [Read the full article](#)

Learn about the value ACC offers for your legal department:

→ [Contact the ACC Corporate Membership team](#)

## Perception Matters, Relationships are Key

*Prabir Chakrabarty, ACC Director of International Corporate Membership & CLO Engagement, has interacted with many Chief Legal Officers and General Counsel. He highlights the importance of perception:*

- **Ensure Legal is perceived as a department that offers options and solutions, and not as the department of “no.”**
- Building relationships is key in this respect. Take time during your first 90 days (and beyond) to develop relationships and communicate, so your business colleagues understand you are working in the company’s best interest.
- Building these relationships makes the discussion easier when you need colleagues to consider a different course of action than the one they initially wanted.
- Legal sometimes needs to say no, but offer alternatives if possible.
- Explain your rationale to stakeholders and see if there is an alternative option.

### TAKE ACTION: Write one or two steps that you plan to implement.

Describe	By what date?
1.	
2.	
Notes:	

## Take Your Seat at the Executive Table

## CHECKLIST 2

What

### 1. Reporting to the CEO and connecting with the board:

- The majority of Chief Legal Officers *report* directly to their company's CEO.
- Seventy-six percent also say they almost always attend company board meetings.
- Why does it matter, and what can you do? Check out the tips below.

Why – Making the Case for a Seat at the Table

### 2. Having the CLO at the executive table *benefits the business*:

- Allows more CLO involvement in *governance and strategic decisions*.
- Ensures that legal considerations are reflected in the organization's business strategy.
- Conveys that your organization takes ethics and compliance seriously.

### 3. The value that the CLO can *provide to the CEO*:

- CLOs' experience working across all company divisions enables them to anticipate and ease the ripple effects of decisions across the organization.
- As a result of their experience dealing with multi-faceted legal and business issues, CLOs are well placed to contribute solutions to complex enterprise issues.
- The CLO is relied on to provide the "*unvarnished truth*," especially in crises.
- CLOs' risk/benefit analysis is highly valuable for executive-level decisions.
- Modern CLOs are business leaders who contribute to the top and the bottom line.

### 4. The CLO can support the CEO's relationship with the board:

- After the CEO, the CLO usually has the most interactions with the board.
- CLOs can help CEOs create a framework for communicating with directors.
- Directors are increasingly looking to CLOs for guidance on compliance matters.
- The CLO can update directors on *a range of key issues* such as public company filings, IP disputes, Directors & Officers insurance, and executive compensation.
- CLOs can help their company navigate board members' *conflicts of interests*.



Tips for When You Don't Have a  
**Seat at the Table**



A direct reporting line between the chief legal officer and chief executive officer is important to corporate culture as a reflection of the “tone at the top” [...]

**Veta T. Richardson and Mary Blatch,** in *Leveraging Legal Leadership: The General Counsel As A Corporate Culture Influencer*



→ [Read the full article](#)

### 5. Start the conversation:

- If you don't report to the CEO or are not invited to board meetings, **start a discussion** with your CEO and make the case for these governance practices.
- **Use ACC data** to advocate for a direct reporting line to the CEO.

### 6. Gain visibility and add value:

- If you cannot obtain a direct reporting line to the CEO, **be present** when other executives are reporting on legal matters.
- **Set up a recurring meeting with the CEO** (weekly if possible) to discuss key business projects, and ensure you're involved in the early stages of these projects.
- **Walk the board through** public filings your company discloses each year.
- **Prepare regular updates to the board** on regulatory trends that impact the organization's business landscape and risk profile, and **expectations on boards**.
- **Propose improvements to the organization's governance.** Highlight advantages for the company.
- **Prepare plans for major crises.** Run tabletop exercises with leadership and key stakeholders.

Learn  
more

This checklist is based mainly on the following ACC resources:

- *CLO Survey Says: Having a Seat at the Table Matters*,  
by David Martí and Amy Chai
- *CLO Roles: From Lawyer to Key Business Leader*,  
by Blake E. Garcia, PhD
- *Leveraging Legal Leadership: The General Counsel  
As A Corporate Culture Influencer*,  
by Veta T. Richardson and Mary Blatch
- *Current Topics to Discuss with Your Board of Directors*,  
by ACC
- *My Take: Why Our Seat at the Table Is Critically Important*,  
by Mike Madden
- *The Synergy of the CEO and CLO*,  
by Tamara Joseph and Mark Perrin
- *Why In-house Counsel Need Executive Presence*,  
by Amii Barnard-Bahn



Legal is the  
connective tissue  
of every company.

**Bertil Majer**  
Chief Legal Officer,  
Sitecore



### TAKE ACTION: Write one or two steps that you plan to implement.

Describe	By what date?
1.	
2.	
Notes:	

## CHECKLIST 3



Consider creating a 'legal front door' or legal intake process to educate the business regarding what legal needs, and the best way to gain legal support.

**Theo Kapodistrias**  
General Counsel,  
Evergen



Gain more leadership tips  
from GC and CLO peers:

→ Join the  
**ACC Law Department  
Management Network**

## Develop Leadership and Business Skills

*It is critical for existing and aspiring General Counsel to develop leadership skills. These skills boost your influence across the business and at the executive level.*

### 1. Develop organizational influence:

- Your effectiveness largely depends on your **ability to influence people and decisions**.
- Influence senior management's decision-making on **legal and business matters**.
- **Demonstrate your understanding of the business**. Get in the field, observe business operations, and incorporate takeaways into the insight and solutions you offer.
- **Drive economic value** through strategic decision-making and offering an added value.
- Be proactive in **building rapport** with business stakeholders.
- **Meet with them** (outside of specific legal projects), get to know them personally, learn their interests, communication style, pain points, and priorities.
- **Ensure your team leaders are placed** at the right levels of corporate leadership, treated as peers by business stakeholders at their level, and invited to business leadership meetings.
- **Offer to mentor** colleagues outside of the law department.

### 2. Lead beyond legal boundaries:

- Embrace **leadership roles** within and outside the organization.
- Provide input on key business decisions.
- Advance internal knowledge sharing, such as to increase awareness of corporate strategies.

### 3. Innovate with technology:

- Champion the adoption of a new process or technology.
- Use **digital platforms** to streamline **contract management** and enable real-time collaboration.
- Help to make the customer journey easier, and communicate about it.

**4. Develop leadership and emotional intelligence:**

- Research indicates that emotional intelligence is a *key differentiator of effective leaders*.
- Be mindful of how emotions may impact your thoughts, decisions, and interactions.
- Acknowledge others' emotions, and understand how it may impact their perspective.
- Develop your *ability to listen fully* without multitasking, to understand and learn.
- Refine your *leadership style* through internal roles and education, such as *leadership-focused webinars* and *leadership development programs*.

**5. Build and mentor professional networks:**

- Lead employee groups, participate in boards, and engage in external mentorship to enhance networking, empathy, and collaborative skills.
- Get GC peers' perspective, such as via the *ACC Law Department Management Network*.
- Attend *CLO-focused events* where you can learn and expand your network with peers.

**6. Build a culture within legal to support the business:**

- Assess the current culture. Is Legal perceived by the business as a hurdle or a partner?
- Build a culture where Legal is viewed as a business facilitator.
- Determine whether training or personnel changes are needed.

**7. Drive proactive innovation and adaptation:**

- Empower Legal to become a *proactive innovation enabler*, guiding the organization through virtual work environments and remote collaborations.
- Consider implementing AI and legal front doors where possible.

**8. Enhance efficiency with automated systems:**

- *Streamline legal workflows* through automation, including document generation and contract management, to *accelerate business processes*.

**9. Engage in regular self-assessment and continuous learning:**

- Continuously assess and adapt your leadership style and skills, staying abreast of industry changes and emerging business needs.



It's really important to make sure that you take a calm and clear approach to managing issues.



**Rebecca Lim,** in *Reflections on Leadership and the Role of the Group General Counsel*, by Andrew McCallum

→ [Read the full article](#)



- *10 Steps to Unlock Your Legal Leadership Potential*, by Simon Stebler and Jill Alder
- *Quick Overview: The General Counsel's Role in Shaping and Advancing Corporate Culture in the Legal Department*, by Dr. So-Ang Park and Lisa Birkenbach
- *A Lawyer's Guide to Leadership – Ten Ways to Boost Your Strategic Contribution*, by Charlie Beasley, Hugo Nanninga, Dede Orraca-Cecil, Angela Pêgas, and Simone Stebler
- *CLO Roles: From Lawyer to Key Business Leader*, by Blake E. Garcia, PhD
- *Empowering In-house Counsel to Become True Business and Innovation Enablers*, by Olga V. Mack
- *How to Gain Leadership Skills Inside and Outside Your Organization*, by Ashley Butts

TAKE ACTION: Write one or two steps that you plan to implement.	
Describe	By what date?
1.	
2.	
Notes:	



## Use Effective Legal Operations

Maximize your legal team's potential. Five tips from experienced in-house peers:

### CHECKLIST 4

#### 1. Assess your current legal operations:

- Consider creating a dedicated legal operations team, if you don't have one.
- Create **dashboards** to understand and monitor your overall legal spend.
- **Benchmark** your legal operations against industry standards.

#### 2. Engage in strategic planning:

- Consult with the CEO and other leaders to understand overall strategic goals.
- Develop a **long-term strategy** for Legal, focused on driving the success of the business.
- **Capture and analyze data** such as legal spend and outcomes, to measure your team's performance.
- Apply **change management** to improve communications and decision-making.

#### 3. Refine your business processes:

- Adopt a **contract lifecycle management tool** integrated with business systems.
- Adopt standard operating procedures to **track** and **protect** intellectual property.
- Apply an **information governance policy** and **records management system**.
- Ensure there is alignment between functions such as Legal, Compliance, and Risk Management, for a holistic understanding of major risks by the business, and for an effective collective effort to mitigate these risks.

#### 4. Use technology to increase efficiency:

- Consider what improvements can be achieved with tools that are already used by the business (such as better information management using Microsoft 365).
- Work with corporate IT to get the most out of **existing technology tools**.
- Create a **technology roadmap** to guide adoption of new tools and systems.
- **Research and test** new technologies, such as **artificial intelligence**.

#### 5. Improve management of outside counsel

- **Centralize management** of **outside counsel** to drive innovation and efficiency.
- Implement an **e-billing and matter management system** to identify cost savings.



Each law department is different, and what works for one company may not work for another.”

**Julie Richer**, in *Legal Ops Brief: What is Legal Operations?*

→ [Read the full article](#)



- [Maturity Model 2.0 for the Operations of a Legal Department](#), by ACC
- [Streamlining Contract Approvals - Navigating the Intersection of Legal Ops & CLM Technology](#), by Chloe Ribal
- [Legal Operations 101: Blueprint for Modern Legal Departments](#), by SimpleLegal

## Five Ways to Gain Strategic Legal Operations Insights:

1. Connect your team with the [ACC Legal Ops community](#).
2. [View survey data](#) from other CLOs and law departments.
3. [Assess the maturity](#) of your legal operations function.
4. [Benchmark](#) your own law department.
5. [Connect at ACC events](#) and share legal operations strategies.

### TAKE ACTION: Write one or two steps that you plan to implement.

Describe	By what date?
1.	
2.	
Notes:	

## Managing Relationships with Outside Counsel

*Working with outside counsel is a critical skill that requires much more than outsourcing work to specialists.*

### 1. Understand business objectives:

- Gain a deep understanding of the organization's overall goals and objectives.

### 2. Establish clear communication channels:

- Set up regular communication channels with outside counsel.
- Clearly *communicate expectations*, priorities, and key performance indicators.

### 3. Align outside counsel with organizational values:

- Ensure that outside counsel aligns with the organization's values and culture.
- Develop *outside counsel guidelines*.

### 4. Implement a selection process:

- Establish a process considering expertise, experience, and cost-effectiveness.
- Maintain a roster of pre-approved law firms.
- Develop and use a model engagement letter. See a *sample in the ACC Library*.

### 5. Define scope of work:

- Clearly define the scope of work for each engagement.
- Establish project timelines and deliverables.

### 6. Negotiate fee structures:

- Negotiate fee structures that align with the organization's budget and goals.
- Consider alternative fee arrangements, such as flat fees or contingencies.

## CHECKLIST 5



Investing in making your outside counsel a part of your team opens up the process for continuous process improvement.

**Rob Falk & Gregory O. Olaniran,** in *Want More From Your Outside Counsel? Apply Your People Management Skills*

→ [Read the full article](#)

**7. Monitor budgets and expenses:**

- Regularly monitor outside counsel budgets and expenses.
- Implement cost-control measures as needed.

**8. Encourage efficiency and innovation:**

- Encourage outside counsel to adopt efficient and innovative practices.
- Explore the use of technology to streamline legal processes.

**9. Implement performance metrics:**

- Establish *key performance indicators* (KPIs) to measure the firms' performance.
- *Provide regular feedback* based on performance metrics.

**10. Promote diversity and inclusion:**

- Encourage the selection of *diverse outside counsel teams*.
- Evaluate law firms based on their proven commitment to diversity and inclusion.

**11. Ensure compliance:**

- Confirm that outside counsel adheres to legal and ethical standards.
- Check that outside counsel complies with agreed-to guidelines.

**12. Maintain confidentiality and security:**

- Establish protocols for the handling of sensitive information.
- Ensure outside counsel complies with *data security* and privacy requirements.

**13. Facilitate collaboration:**

- Foster a collaborative relationship between in-house and outside counsel.
- Encourage open communication and knowledge sharing.

**14. Review and audit work:**

- Regularly review and audit the work performed by outside counsel.
- Address any issues or concerns promptly.

**15. Resolve disputes promptly:**

- Address any disputes or conflicts with outside counsel promptly and professionally.
- Consider alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

**16. Stay informed about industry trends:**

- Stay informed about legal industry trends and changes.
- Anticipate potential legal challenges and meet regularly to discuss changes in laws.

**17. Evaluate and benchmark:**

- Periodically evaluate outside counsel's performance against industry benchmarks.
- Consider feedback from other law departments and organizations.

**18. Build long-term relationships:**

- Foster long-term relationships with key outside counsel.
- Explore opportunities for strategic partnerships.

**Learn more**

- [What to request from Law Firms](#), by Mark Roellig and Stephen Mar
- [Fostering Collaboration: Building Strong Relationships Between Corporate In-House Legal Departments and Outside Counsel](#), by Liz Lugones
- [Want More From Your Outside Counsel? Apply Your People Management Skills](#), by Rob Falk and Gregory O. Olaniran

**TAKE ACTION: Write one or two steps that you plan to implement.**

Describe	By what date?
1.	
2.	
Notes:	



## CHECKLIST 6

## Your Role in Advancing DEI

*Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is critical to organizational success.*

Key steps for leading your organization's DEI efforts:

**1. Understand the current state:**

- Review existing diversity data within the organization.
- Assess current DEI policies and practices.
- **Benchmark the maturity** of your organization's DEI program.

**2. Educate yourself:**

- Attend DEI training sessions or workshops.
- Read relevant literature on DEI in the legal profession.
- Stay current on the latest developments regarding **key DEI topics**.
- Network with other legal professionals committed to DEI.

**3. Build a DEI team:**

- Appoint a dedicated DEI officer or coordinator.
- Assemble a diverse DEI task force within the law department.

**4. Set clear DEI goals:**

- Define specific, measurable, and time-bound DEI objectives.
- Align DEI goals with the organization's overall strategic plan.

**5. Engage leadership and get personally involved:**

- Advocate for DEI at the executive level.
- Volunteer to be an executive sponsor for DEI activities.
- Encourage your leadership to actively support and participate in DEI initiatives.

**6. Audit policies and practices:**

- Conduct a review of current policies to identify potential biases.
- Ensure that hiring, promotion, and evaluation processes are fair and unbiased.

Lead your DEI strategy:

→ **Connect with the ACC Foundation**

**7. Implement inclusive hiring practices:**

- Help HR incorporate diversity into the recruitment outreach process.
- Encourage HR to seek diverse pools of applicants for all positions.
- Be mindful of *legal restrictions* on using diversity factors in employment.

**8. Promote education and training:**

- Introduce DEI training for all employees.
- Develop ongoing education programs to raise awareness.

**9. Foster an inclusive culture:**

- Promote a culture of inclusion and respect.
- Encourage open communication and dialogue about DEI issues.

**10. Community engagement:**

- Support and participate in community organizations focused on DEI.
- Establish partnerships with organizations promoting diversity in the legal field.

**11. Metrics and reporting:**

- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to *measure DEI progress*.
- Regularly report on DEI initiatives and outcomes to leadership.

**12. Legal pipeline programs:**

- Support *programs* that encourage diverse individuals to pursue legal careers.
- Establish partnerships with law schools and *organizations* focused on diversity.

**13. Create a safe reporting mechanism:**

- Implement a confidential reporting system for discrimination or harassment.
- Ensure that employees feel comfortable reporting incidents.

**14. Regularly reassess and adapt:**

- Regularly review and reassess DEI strategies based on outcomes.
- Adapt initiatives as needed to address emerging challenges.

**15. Celebrate success and acknowledge challenges:**

- Acknowledge and celebrate achievements in DEI.
- Address challenges transparently and use them as opportunities for growth.



- **Gauge** the maturity level of your organization’s DEI program with the roadmap from the *ACC Foundation DEI Maturity Model*.
- **Benchmark** your organization’s DEI program with the *DEI maturity assessment tool* provided by the *ACC Foundation* and Ethisphere.
- **Read** the *DEI, Esq., a quarterly ACC Docket column* on diversity, equity, and inclusion, by Toyota Motor North America Inc. employment counsel Jane Howard-Martin, Connie Almond, Olesja Cormney, Jennifer N. Jones, and Meyling Ly Ortiz.

**TAKE ACTION: Write one or two steps that you plan to implement.**

Describe	By what date?
1.	
2.	
Notes:	

## Being the First GC of Your Organization

*As the first GC, you need to show your value and build the legal function.*

### 1. Initial Steps for the First General Counsel:

- **Key priority:** Build relationships with your supervisor (ideally, the CEO) and senior leaders such as the Chief Financial Officer and the board's risk and audit committee. Meet other stakeholders that you identify as key relationships.
  - Learn their expectations for your role, their priorities, and pain points.
  - Learn which areas they perceive as priority risks or concerns.
- Identify the responsibilities you will fulfill.
- Establish clear reporting relationships and departmental functions.
- Learn about the company's operations, industry, market, and strategic direction.
- Read the corporate strategy, internal audit reports, action roadmaps. Get recent risk and audit committee materials. This should help you understand the risk and governance landscape and ask the right questions.
- **Map out** key enterprise risks, **mitigation priorities**, and discuss solutions.
- Use the feedback you gathered from stakeholders to triage priorities and **develop a law department strategy** that focuses on the most critical points.

### 2. Setting up the Law Department:

- Create a mission statement for the law department and incorporate it into your strategy and roadmap document.
- Identify and manage your department's business and legal responsibilities.
- Educate other departments on the law department's processes.
- Prioritize work and develop a process for handling legal tasks. Put in place matter-management and analytics technology:
  - Track legal matters, work allocation and productivity, and
  - Develop data-driven legal reports for executive leadership and the board.

## CHECKLIST 7



In the process of meeting key stakeholders, the fact I was new to the industry was an opportunity for them to teach me during our first interactions. This was helpful in building trust - and also gave me 'real world' insight into the industry.

**Michelle Anglin**  
General Counsel,  
Reece Group





Listen, listen, listen!  
Look for small ‘low hanging’ quick wins, where you can add value to them in small ways immediately.

**Michelle Anglin**  
General Counsel,  
Reece Group



### 3. Budgeting and Managing Resources:

- Gather data on outside counsel spend and remedy inefficient spend.
- Consider drafting outside counsel guidelines to govern relationships with firms.
- Draft a model *outside counsel retention agreement*. Use it with firms.
- Develop strategies for managing legal spend, such as alternative fee arrangements and diversifying the pool of providers.
- Develop *metrics to evaluate outside counsel's performance*.
- Liaise with the Finance team, understand the budgeting process and cycle, and adhere to it. Develop a budgeting strategy for the law department.

### 4. Developing the Law Department:

- *Determine priority staffing needs* for the department.
- Show management the expected increased productivity from hiring.
- Focus on recruiting and retaining talent.
- Ensure HR actively seeks a *diverse pool of applicants*.
- Assess technology needs. Identify the resulting efficiency gains. Plan implementation.

### 5. Adding Value and Measuring Success:

- **Identify and discuss** solutions to the business's pain points and priority risks.
- *Develop and utilize metrics* to demonstrate the law department's value.
- **Use legal ops** data to spot trends and opportunities to improve. **Set baselines** (via a spreadsheet tracking the number of claims, outside counsel spend, duration of disputes). **Identify abnormal deviations**, such as spikes in claims from a geographic area, or particularly costly cases. **Advance solutions**, such as identifying business factors behind claims trends, or pushing to settle disputes.
- **Review policies and processes**, identify what to keep, what to change, and explain the reasons why the change is needed.
- **Create templates and playbooks** for frequent contracts. Train the legal team and other departments on which templates they can use and how.
- After a few months, *survey your client teams' satisfaction* regularly and *seek feedback* – once they've had time to experience Legal's impact and relationships.



- **Identify opportunities to show how Legal contributes** to overall performance. Identify executive committees to present regular legal reports. Seek to connect with the board or its risk and audit committee, and to have a legal update added as a standing item on their agenda.
- Identify **gaps in governance** and make improvement recommendations.

## Clarify Expectations About Your Role

*As needed over time, educate stakeholders about your role:*

- Demonstrate how you can provide valuable insight to business decisions.
- Discuss how you are flexible to adapt your role to the evolving needs of your stakeholders need, but also be clear on the scope of the legal function.
- Explain you're the legal counsel of the whole company itself, and not the personal legal counsel of any employee or board member.
- Explain how privilege applies; share guidance to avoid inadvertent waivers.

*You may need to dispel common misconceptions such as:*

- *"Privilege applies because you are present or participating in a discussion or copied to an email or other communication, right?"*
- *"The GC is there just for legal matters and doesn't need to be involved in business decisions."*
- *"Since you're the GC, you should know all areas of law."*
- *"The GC is my personal legal counsel!"*

**Also  
check  
out**

→ [ACC 2023 Law Department Compensation Survey report \(executive summary\)](#)

**Learn  
more**

« The checklist is based mainly on the following ACC resources:

- [Building an In-house Department from Scratch: Identifying Priorities, Red Flags, & Managing Business Relationships](#): Watch the presentation by Emir Crowne, Sherie Edwards, Dick Mosher, and Matt Nolan. Also view the checklists in the [presentation slides](#).
- [Establishing the In-house Law Department: A Guide for an Organization's First General Counsel](#)
- Special thanks to **Michelle Anglin**, General Counsel, Reece Group, for her insight.

**TAKE ACTION: Write one or two steps that you plan to implement.**

Describe	By what date?
1.	
2.	

Notes:

## Five Tips for New In-house Counsel

Is it your first in-house job? You may have years as a law firm partner or associate, or just graduated from law school. Get five tips from experienced in-house counsel:

### 1. You protect the company, enable the business, and challenge your peers:

- You advise the business to make sound decisions.
- You are usually not the ultimate decision-maker, the business person is.

### 2. Become familiar with business concepts, tools, and products:

- Get familiar with balance sheets, financial statements, and marketing.
- Learn the commercial and financial parameters of the projects, so you can offer legal guidance that adds value.
- Educate yourself by speaking with the Finance and Business teams.
- Get business education. Check out the [ACC Mini MBA for in-house Counsel](#).

### 3. Business teams value speed, conciseness, and solutions:

- Favor short bullet points over paragraphs in emails. Avoid memos.
- Avoid saying “no.” Where possible, identify alternative options to achieve the ultimate business objective.

### 4. Seek feedback from the business:

- Survey the key client teams about Legal’s work.
- Implement observable changes. Improve.
- Offer praise to business colleagues for their ideas.

### 5. Build relationships in and especially outside of Legal. Talk to people:

- Understand their business priorities, pain points, and goals.
- Take them to lunch or coffee.
- Invite a leader from another department to join your team meeting.
- Especially when colleagues work remotely, identify ways to make everyone feel engaged in a team dynamic. Consider including fun activities in team meetings.

## CHECKLIST 8



Being able to understand the financial drivers of the business and the commercial and financial metrics of projects is the only way to provide value-added commercially relevant legal advice.

**Michelle Anglin**  
General Counsel,  
Reece Group



I hold monthly team meetings where we play games (bingo, Scattergories, etc.) with prizes. I try to invite a leader from another department to join us each month.

**Krystal Saab**  
General Counsel,  
Bodybuilding.com





Ask what kinds of projects people are working on, try to arrange to have lunch with department heads, director-levels — the people who will be calling you and the people you will need, when you need the facts.

**Todd H. Silberman**, in *Wisdom of the Crowd—The First General Counsel*

→ [Read the full article](#)

**Learn more**

The checklist is based mainly on the following ACC resources:

- [Top Ten Tips to be Successful as a New In-House Counsel \(and Beyond\)](#), by Sarah Karlgaard
- [Understand Your Organization’s Risk Tolerance Practical Tips for In-house Counsel](#), ACC checklist
- [14 Ways to Prepare for Your First GC Role](#), by Ashoo Sharma, Kimberly D. Lerman

## Is This your First In-house Role? Three Tips to Boost Your Transition

1. **Join the ACC New to In-house Network.**
2. **Connect and learn with CLO peers at ACC events.**
3. **Visit the ACC Resource Library and find sample contracts, policies, checklists, and insights.**

**TAKE ACTION: Write one or two steps that you plan to implement.**

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## CHECKLIST 9

## Talent Retention Tips for Legal Leaders

This checklist is sponsored by Robert Half.

How can you retain talent in your legal department? Here are six tips sponsored by Robert Half and authored by Jamy J. Sullivan, JD, executive director, Robert Half.

**The landscape:** According to Robert Half's *Demand for Skilled Talent* report, the legal job market remains competitive. But many legal professionals are getting restless. Forty percent were looking to make a job move in the first half of 2024 (up from 32 percent in the fall 2023). Many seek a higher salary, a career change, improved work-life balance, and more opportunities for advancement.

### 1. Support work-life balance:

- *Only about one in four legal positions* included flexible work arrangements in 2023. Organizations that offer this popular perk may be better able to retain valuable talent.
- As a leader, encourage employees to take time off, and lead by example.

### 2. Offer meaningful work:

- Many legal professionals entered the profession to help others and make a difference.
- Beyond routine assignments, look for opportunities to enrich employees' experiences and career goals, including pro bono assignments.

### 3. Recognize and reward contributions:

- Regularly acknowledge achievements and milestones to foster motivation and creativity.
- Consider layering a variety of recognition strategies, like publicizing accomplishments or awarding extra time off or monetary prizes.

### 4. Take another look at compensation:

- *Keeping legal salary packages competitive* helps retention rates.
- Continuously evaluate compensation and benefits.
- Consider student loan repayment assistance and tuition reimbursement programs.



Some team members will inevitably leave your organization sooner than you'd like. But if they leave knowing they were valued and supported, they'll likely say good things about your business and may even **come back to work for you** one day.



**Jamy J. Sullivan, JD,**  
Executive Director,  
Robert Half

**5. Prioritize learning and advancement:**

- Invest in employee development and establish a **strong succession plan**.
- Support continuing education and specialized certifications.
- Support building mentorship programs for employees to learn from each other.
- Establish clear pathways for internal promotion to nurture talent and establish a succession plan.

**6. Give your team what they need:**

- Equip your team with tools, time, and technology that enhance performance and help them stay on top of industry trends.
- When workloads are high, consider **contract legal support** to help reduce pressure.



- **Connect** with other legal team leaders in the **ACC Law Department Management Network**.
- **Explore** resources in the **ACC Library**.
- **Visit** the ACC **Online Learning Center**.
- **As Legal Departments Evolve, So Do Talent Needs**, by Robert Half
- **2024 In-Demand Legal Roles and Hiring Trends**, by Robert Half
- **2024 Robert Half Salary Guide**, by Robert Half

**TAKE ACTION: Write one or two steps that you plan to implement.**

Describe	By what date?
1.	
2.	
Notes:	

## Connect with GC and CLO Peers

### » Connect with the ACC Law Department Management Network:

- Monthly live discussions on law department management topics.
- A dedicated e-forum to connect with peers and seek their insights.
- [Join the network!](#) For ACC members only. Not an ACC member? [Join ACC](#).

### » Join global peers at the ACC Chief Legal Officer Global Summit:

- Attend global event that shapes CLO's role as strategic leaders.
- For CLOs/GCs serving in the highest-ranking legal role in their organization.
- Share and learn what works, what doesn't, and what's coming next.
- [Learn more about the CLO Summit](#).

### » Learn strategies at the ACC Foundation Cybersecurity Summit:

- Learn about the latest cyber threats and innovations for in-house.
- Discuss tips for preventing and responding to data breaches.
- [Learn more about ACC Foundation events](#).

### » Engage in the CLO Club at the ACC Annual Meeting:

- Attend the largest annual gathering of the global in-house community.
- Bring your in-house team. Get CLE/CPD credits.
- Engage in lively CLO roundtables on in-house strategies, tips, and trends.
- Enjoy the unique experience of our vibrant ACC in-house community.
- [Learn more about the CLO Club](#).

## Support your Deputy General Counsel's Career

### » Nominate your DGC for the Executive Leadership Institute:

- An ACC master class for the next generation of GC, tailored for rising in-house leaders.
- Attendees learn strategic decision-making to shape the future of their organization.
- Industry leaders share insights, strategies, and best practices with attendees.
- An unparalleled opportunity to grow with like-minded professionals.
- [Learn more about the Executive Leadership Institute](#).



## 10 Sample Tools, Forms, and Checklists

1. [Data Breach Checklist](#)
2. [Employee termination checklist](#), by Ogletree Deakins
3. [Personal Leadership Philosophy](#), by Mark Roellig
4. [Sample Board Meeting Minutes Templates](#)
5. [Sample Contract Management Briefing \(Drafting/Review/Approval Policy and Process\)](#)
6. [Outside Counsel Master Services Agreement](#)
7. [Sample AI Usage Policy](#)
8. [Maturity Model 2.0 for the Operations of a Legal Department](#)
9. [ACC Foundation DEI Maturity Model and Assessment](#)
10. [Data Privacy Program Assessment tool](#)

## 10 Insights on Trending Topics

1. [Cybersecurity Basics for In-house Counsel](#), by ACC
2. [ChatGPT and AI Applications for In-house Lawyers](#), by Spiwe L. Jefferson
3. [Legal Tech: Integrate AI Compliance by Asking These Questions](#), by Olga V. Mack
4. [How the GC Empowers the Board to Govern the Green Wave](#), by Joanne Moss and Therese Megens
5. [6 Steps for Effective ESG Oversight](#), by Stefanie Holland and Sehrish Siddiqui
6. [Quick Overview: Delegation of Authority \(with Sample Form\)](#), by Casey B. Harris
7. [Building a Compliance & Ethics Program When You Must Do So with More Influence than Resources](#), by Laurel Burke
8. [Ten Things: Creating a Good Contract Playbook](#), by Sterling Miller
9. [Agility Tips for Legal Operations Professionals](#), by Kelly Mickelson
10. [Ten Tips for Creating an Effective Document Retention Policy \(United States\)](#), by Elaine F. Harwell

## More Resources

1. **Visit the [ACC Resource Library](#).**  
Find thousands of resources:
  - Sample contracts and policies
  - Checklists and articles
  - ACC in-house survey reports
2. **Explore [ACC Curated Collections](#):**
  - [Artificial Intelligence](#)
  - [Privacy and Cybersecurity](#)
  - [ESG \(Environmental, Social, and Governance\)](#)
  - [Teaching Law School](#)

Interested in authoring or sponsoring an ACC resource? Contact us at [legalresources@acc.com](mailto:legalresources@acc.com)