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Opportunities Abound

Career Development



The legal department plays a paramount role in all of our organizations. We advise our business partners, contribute to strategy, implement processes, and much more. Our colleagues look to us not only for legal advice but also to serve as organizational leaders. As such, we must lead by example, which includes being open to and supportive of new ways of doing business.

We can all agree that advances in technology make our lives easier — for the most part. We can communicate with a colleague down the hall just as quickly as we can with one across the ocean. We can send documents via “the cloud” and sign them via our smartphone from anywhere in the world. While we know this kind of access has its disadvantages, including cyber attacks, data protection issues, and privilege concerns, we typically embrace technological advances. That said, let’s face it: As the lawyers in the room, we are the ones most concerned with implementing that new software or migrating to the cloud (for the very reasons outlined above). However, the legal department should champion and lead in the area of innovation — and that often begins with embracing new (and always evolving) technology.

I have a passion for innovation, and I strongly believe that in-house counsel should be at the forefront of introducing new ways to streamline processes and move the company forward. In fact, I have finalised an article with Bertrand Alexis outlining the 10 things general counsel need to know about blockchain technology. As you’re likely aware, a blockchain consists of multiple “smart contracts” integrated into one “block,” which in turn is linked to other blocks in an unalterable chain (one change can cause a cascade of others). In the article, we outline, among other things, the steps a general counsel can take to determine whether blockchain or smart contracts are the right fit for his or her legal department.

Smart contracts create a challenge for lawmakers trying to keep up with blockchain applications. This

challenge, like all others that come our way in an evolving business environment, creates opportunities for corporate legal departments to contribute to the disruption of old approaches and processes. If it's not working, we can change it, and if it is working, we can take it a step further and identify organizational efficiencies. What a great way to show value, while also further demonstrating the legal department's commitment to innovation!

Another opportunity disguised as a challenge, for in-house counsel in Europe especially, is the impending EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that will come into force late May 2018. According to the *Global Perspectives: ACC In-house Trends Report*, 32 percent of lawyers practicing in the European Union indicated that the EU-US Privacy Shield legislation (which replaced the Safe Harbor Agreement last year) would greatly affect their company's business operations with the United States. Again, this is the perfect time to lead in times of change — preparing your organization for what's to come and putting procedures in place to protect it.

ACC is constantly working to develop resources to help you navigate changing legislation such as the Privacy Shield and evolving technologies like blockchain. This issue of *ACC Docket* alone includes articles on protecting your company in the wake of Privacy Shield legislation, and how blockchain technology is being implemented within healthcare. These articles are just a sample of the many resources contributed by your in-house peers to your in-house bar association. Offering tried and tested solutions that work, and often including sample forms and documents that you can repurpose for your own in-house practice — you've got one extensive network to turn to in these times of change.

Want to make that network even stronger? Consider attending the ACC Annual Meeting October 15 – 18, in Washington, DC. I can personally attest to the caliber of this meeting, due not just to sessions that reflect the current business and legal landscape, but also to the unique opportunity to network with peers from across the globe — in real time. The technological advances that allow us to easily communicate pale in comparison, in my humble opinion, to a face-to-face greeting and handshake.

As in-house counsel, we must constantly monitor trends within our industry, across industries, and regarding new and evolving laws and technology. ACC will continue to do its part, facilitating the creation of resources like this issue of the *Docket*, the *Global Perspectives: ACC In-house Trends Report*, and educational events like the ACC Annual Meeting. I hope to see you there.

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