

Member Milestones

Interviews and Profiles





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MEMBER MILESTONE: 15TH ANNIVERSARY
(JOINED MAY 2001)

What influenced you to join the Association of Corporate Counsel?

In 2001, I was asked to lead the legal department in Greece of LAFARGE, an international cement company based in France, although I had no previous experience as an in-house lawyer. I had worked in law firms in Greece and all of a sudden, I would have to be an in-house lawyer — and as a matter of fact, I would have to be in charge of the legal department. The company in Greece had about 3,000 employees then and that meant a lot of responsibilities. My young age, naiveté, and the ignorance of the risks involved made me say yes, and of course I never regretted it. I wanted to be prepared, though. I tried to find information as to what an in-house lawyer has to do, but there was nothing publicly available locally. The only thing I found was ACC, so I became a member and gained

access to so many resources. As a matter of fact, I paid out of pocket for participation in the conferences and my association fees, but I considered it as an investment in myself. I think that it is an investment that paid off many times over.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of your career thus far?

My in-house career has taken me to various industries: cement, oil, retail, and now pharma. I thoroughly enjoy the diversity of problems I am asked to solve, the fact that I'm working with professionals from other disciplines and, in all honesty, the paycheck, too! Within ACC, I would say that the pinnacle was the honor of being the president of the European Chapter, and leading its 2,200 members in 2014/15.

What ACC resources have been the most beneficial to you?

ACC caters to the needs of in-house lawyers as being more specialized than those of other lawyers. In addition, every legal department, even in large businesses, is small in comparison to a law firm. Thus the lawyer — even of a big legal department — does not have the access to information, material, templates, and everything else law firm associates have. So, I've used many times the forms, templates, and other material that relates to the best practices of seasoned colleagues. I've attended training events in the form of conferences, seminars, webinars, and workshops. Networking opportunities abound in all these events and are enhanced by online tools that facilitate the exchange of views and information, like the e-groups. And let's not forget Jobline, although it needs to improve its coverage of Europe.

What is the most interesting aspect of working for Pfizer?

What is unique to working for a pharma company is the satisfaction of knowing that your work ultimately contributes to helping people improve their health. Pfizer is a solid company that through its combination with Allergan is now preparing to create a leading global pharmaceutical company with the strength to research, discover, and deliver more medicines and therapies to more people around the world.

What are some of the benefits of working for a global company?

A global company provides access to best practices used by colleagues elsewhere, can be helpful when contemplating an international career, and helps to grow one's network. What I find exciting in Pfizer Legal is that this is a global team of extremely talented legal (and legal ops) professionals that are supportive, resourceful, and experienced. They not only can do the job but also have fun doing it. I feel very privileged to be part of such a team.

What are the biggest challenges in-house attorneys will face in the coming years?

Well, I wish I had the crystal ball that would help me answer this — but I don't! I could recite the usual "doing more with less" and "disruptive technology threat" stuff, but these are all part of our daily life now, so I won't go there. Let me put it in another way: most of the questions we get from our internal clients are forward-looking — but our training and mentality are backward-looking. People want us to tell them how to lawfully do new things and we look for precedents from the past to find the answers. Don't you think there's something flawed in this method? I believe we've made huge progress in recent years towards the model of the in-house lawyer as business partner, but maybe we'll soon need a new paradigm.

Association of Corporate Counsel



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