Passport Ready. Visa Approved.

Career Development

Early in my career, I served as corporate counsel at Sunoco Inc., based in Philadelphia, PA. As a young lawyer at Sunoco, I submitted a proposal to work in the company's London office. Although the opportunity went to another much more experienced lawyer, I think I will always regret not having been able to live and work outside the United States because international experience is so professionally enriching.

Today, the option to work internationally is one that many in-house lawyers have, with companies' operations often spanning the globe. According to the *ACC 2015 Chief Legal Officers Survey*, 25 percent of the CLOs surveyed reported having lawyers on staff who work in a location outside the country where their organization is headquartered.

If the opportunity to work internationally ever comes your way, my advice is to take it. Better still, raise your hand and find a way to make it happen for yourself. Not only will you expand your skill set while advancing your organization's business, but you'll also gain valuable cross cultural knowledge, which in turn will enhance your ability to work effectively with people who are not like you, a key leadership trait.

Think of the value your cross-cultural awareness would add to your ability to spot possible marketing missteps or communications issues that could make your organization appear culturally insensitive or worse, uninformed. This holds especially true as you move into more senior positions. Whether general counsel is your current title or a title to which you aspire, your work contributes to the company's image, growth and bottom-line. These are things that every company's board of directors cares about. In fact, board governance is discussed in this issue of the *ACC Docket*. "GC Growth: How the Law Department Contributes to Improved Board Performance" explores the expanded role of general counsel, offering tips on how to become a trusted advisor.

Other articles in this career-focused issue explore the importance of developing emotional intelligence (another quality of a great leader); how to create a timeless law department that capitalizes not only on technological advances but also on its globally diverse lawyers; and the evolving role of in-house counsel in India. Like in many countries, the role of in-house counsel has evolved rapidly in India, with young lawyers sometimes opting for in-house careers as opposed to law firm work. The author explores what lawyers need to know about this emerging region's business environment, including compliance in multiple jurisdictions and varying standards in the realm of consumer and data protection.

How does one advance their career, become a trusted advisor to the board and business, and a leader that others want to follow? Aside from reading this issue of the *Docket*, using other ACC resources like those provided by the New to In-house Committee and networking with your in-house peers at upcoming educational programs like the ACC General Counsel Summit to be held next month in London, I suggest learning as much as you can about your company's business and putting a few more stamps on your passport.

Although I didn't get to work in Sunoco's London office, my travels have taken me to 33 nations and counting, some of which I had the pleasure to visit the first time on behalf of ACC. Meeting with our members is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job. Each visit is a true learning opportunity and inspires me to work with our super-talented ACC staff to spur innovation and new services in support of your in-house practice. As a global organization, ACC's goal is to continuously get better at helping you to expand your network and improve your cross-border facility. We're glad to be able to travel with you on this journey.

Veta T. Richardson

Former President & CEO

Association of Corporate Counsel

Veta T. Richardson is the immediate past president and chief executive officer of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC). Headquartered in Washington, DC, ACC is the world's largest legal association dedicated exclusively to serving the interests of in-house counsel. With an international membership of more than 45,000 in-house lawyers at more than 10,000 organizations in 85 countries, ACC serves as the "voice of the in-house bar" for corporate lawyers at 98 percent of the Fortune 100 and 51 percent of the Global 1000.

With more than 60 chapter operations around the world, Richardson's top priorities as CEO involve continuing to increase ACC's global footprint and charting the organization through a strategic plan and vision designed to strengthen its position as the global voice for in-house counsel. Members look to ACC to advocate in support of their rights and interests as in-house counsel, as well as to offer the practice resources, education, global legal and regulatory analysis, and networking opportunities needed to advance their professional development.