



Q&A with Mun Lai on the ACC In-house Certification Program

Interviews and Profiles

Skills and Professional Development



Why did you decide to participate in the ACC In-house Counsel Certification program? What made it stand out?

I am an ACC member and after hearing about the ACC In-house Certification Program, I decided to look into it. The course materials, as well as the opportunity to meet and work with other in-house lawyers was very appealing. I also spoke with ACC staff who provided great insight into the course and how previous programs went. It was exciting to be part of a global program that is known worldwide. Additionally, the online delivery offered me the flexibility I needed to be able to attend the course.



Mun Lai, legal counsel - Bridgestone Australia & New Zealand, furthered his career by earning ACC's In-house Counsel Certification.

Can you share a key takeaway from the program? What was a key lesson or message that you were able to take back and immediately apply in your legal department?

One of the key messages was making sure that we, as in-house counsel, demonstrate our value to the businesses and to make the legal function an indispensable part of it.

The course identifies some of the key ways this can be achieved such as reporting lines and strategic planning. One thing the program did really well was to reinforce these key messages through practical workshops and activities. I particularly enjoyed a hypothetical legal risk assessment which was completed in small teams. This was a great opportunity to get to know and to learn from my teammates as well as the rest of the cohort as we presented our findings in a mock board presentation scenario.

You were a member of the first cohort that completed the ACC In-house Counsel Certification Program in a virtual format over multiple weeks. How did you find the virtual format and did it still provide opportunities to connect and engage with your fellow attendees?

I was really grateful that the program was offered in a virtual format as it would have been difficult for me to attend a face-to-face session given I am based in South Australia.

I was able to connect with a number of the attendees though perhaps not as many as I may have if it were a face-to-face session. Hopefully future courses will provide more time for an open forum for the cohorts to interact with each other. That being said, I had a really fantastic group and we continue to stay in touch even after completing the program.

Overall, I thought the online format worked really well. It was the first time it was offered so I am sure it will continue to improve with each iteration.

The certification program is intended to explore several core competency areas, including developing stakeholder relationships, law department management, and legal services. In your opinion, why are these skills — or core competencies — essential for in-house success?

The days of in-house counsel just being a lawyer have come and gone. There is now a real expectation that we really are no longer just lawyers and are instead strategic business partners. Therefore, in-house lawyers need to understand the business' operations, objectives and the environment which the business operates. In-house counsel also have an important role in setting the tone and creating a culture of ethics and compliance. Building relationships and trust with stakeholders plays a crucial role in empowering in-house counsel in establishing and reinforcing this culture.

Can you provide an example of how the program helped your understanding and delivery of one of these core competencies?

As mentioned earlier, one of the key takeaways from the course was making sure that in-house counsel can demonstrate their value to their businesses. Traditionally, this is something that inhouse counsel have struggled with. However, the program identifies some of the key areas where in-house counsel can demonstrate value and align their roles with functions that cannot be simply outsourced. The program also gives you the tools such as being able to conduct legal and compliance reviews so that you can implement it in your own role.

Looking back at the course, how will the In-house Counsel Certified (ICC) designation help advance your in-house career?

The course provided a great foundation for me to continue building my in-house career. Just as importantly, I have met some fantastic people whom I look forward to meeting in-person once the COVID-19 restrictions allow for international travel.

Would you recommend ACC's In-house Counsel Certification Program to your colleagues? What advice can you offer other corporate counsel who want to participate in the program, but may need to convince their GC or boss?

I would highly recommend the ICC program to my colleagues. There are a few factors that might resonate with a GC:

- The course content and facilitators were excellent.
- The program provides some excellent resources that can be leveraged back in the workplace.
- It was a relatively compact course (approximately three to four weeks) and because the course was delivered online and after work hours, I was able to complete the course without intruding into my regular workload. It also meant there wasn't any costs associated with flights and accommodation.
- I have reached out to some of my fellow attendees since completing the program and they have come through with the goods and provided me with some very handy precedents!

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