


# 2021 ACC Top 10 30-Something: Tarek Nakkach

**Interviews and Profiles**



*The ACC Top 10 30-Somethings awards recognize in-house counsel between the ages of 30 and 39 for their innovation, global perspectives, proactive practice, advocacy efforts, and pro bono and community service work.*



Tarek Nakkach is considered one of the most influential general counsel in the Middle East by the Legal 500 GC Powerlist. But he didn't initially plan to be a lawyer. Coming from a family of bankers, his father encouraged him to become a lawyer to venture on his own. Once he started law, he loved it and has since ascended to regional legal counsel – UKIMESA at Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) in Dubai.

After earning his JD from St. Joseph's University of Beirut, Tarek received a Master of Law from Michigan State University. Learning another jurisdiction's laws has broadened his perspective and approach to law in general. He is a fellow at the Assuring Autonomy International Program at the University of York. There, he focuses on the liability and ethics of AI, including liability, data protection, and privacy.

Although robotics and AI are burgeoning fields, not many lawyers are specializing in them. Tarek capitalized on this to upgrade his career. He has since become one of Dubai's foremost AI thought leaders, speaking at international events, writing articles, and hosting events as a member of the ACC Middle East Chapter's technology committee.

His AI expertise, coupled with HPE's culture of innovation, led to the creation of an automated resource tool. The legal department asked its members for solutions to simplify communication within the team. Tarek pitched the Chatbot, a Natural Language Processing tool with access to internal templates that readily answers team members' questions. Impressed by his suggestion, HPE Legal Department organized a hackathon to develop and implement the time-saving technology that's used by his in-house colleagues worldwide. Tarek considers himself "fortunate to be part of a legal department that fosters innovation."

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That investment in innovation extends beyond the legal department. Tarek helped build HPE's Digital Life Garage, an innovation lab based in HPE's Dubai offices that offers HPE resources to startups and government agencies. Tarek and his legal colleagues worked under tight deadlines to propose a plan of operation, secure regulatory approvals, and standardize IP rights for multiple parties. Once completed, the Dubai government endorsed the project in a country-wide media campaign — making it an official success.

Data privacy is another cause Tarek has championed. The United Arab Emirates presently has no unified data privacy regulation, some areas are "free zones" and follow their own regulations while the AMEA region has a series of laws, for example.

"This is why we as lawyers have the privilege and obligation to promote a unified data privacy regulation," Tarek asserts. He was one of the first members of the UAE GCC Data Privacy Working

Group. Together with his colleagues, they lobby, write articles, and host seminars to promote the importance of data privacy regulations.

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Tarek's work at HPE goes beyond UAE's borders. He helped establish HPE's Agility Center in Bangalore, worked with teams across the globe and managed teams from Tunisia and Egypt. Managing international teams has its challenges, but "tearing down the walls" by working remotely, as Tarek describes it, has facilitated global communication. It also prepared them for the office exodus when the shelter-in-place orders started.

Similarly, HPE laid the groundwork for prioritizing work-life balance before pandemic burnout overwhelmed the world. Work-life balance is essential to Tarek, as he prioritizes his family and self-care first. In the long run, it makes you a better employee, he explains: "If you're comfortable in your skin and things are going well for you at home, then you'll be able to give more at work."

When he's not spending time with his wife and two sons, he's writing a book to disconnect from work. Inspired by his beloved crime TV shows, the novel is about a small-town crime, painted with a scenic backdrop of Lebanon's iconic pine tree forests.

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